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Bible Thoughts
For Daily Life

BIBLE THOUGHTS FOR DAILY LIFE;

OR,

FAMILY READINGS FROM ST. MARK'S GOSPEL.

BY

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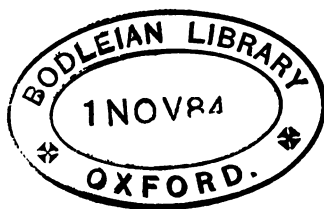
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PREFACE.

The object of the following pages is to offer some suggestions and interesting thoughts for family reading. The writer hopes that these thoughts will be found to be practical, and such as can readily link themselves on to the familiar words of the Holy Bible. The many excellent commentaries which have been written, treat fully of controversial and perplexing questions, and as those questions cannot possibly be entered into in the short time usually allotted to the morning family reading, no allusion has been made to them.

O. H. C.

INTRODUCTION.

THE mere letter of Scripture, read without comment or application, too often fails to lay hold of unreflecting minds—especially if much occupied with the businesses or the cares of life: and how few can claim exemption from these! The special efforts of Satan are employed to prevent the Word from entering the heart when it falls upon the outward ear, in the same manner as he attempts (and with such frequent success) to divert our thoughts when engaged in prayer. It is, of course, his interest and his policy to block up, as far as possible, these two principal ways of approaching God. The Spirit of God must indeed “open” and enlighten the heart to attend to, and receive, the message which each verse and word of Scripture conveys. In Lydia’s case, which we may take as a typical one, a blessing was given to the outward explanation of the Word, the Spirit making use of it so as to introduce and bring home to the heart the power of the Word itself.

In the busy whirl of this world’s demands upon us, only a limited time can be allotted to family prayer. Hence the necessity for brevity, and consequently for uttering, in our brief comments, if possible, something pointed, fresh, and stirring: something which, however practical, will convey the germ, at least, of the whole “counsel of God” as regards our salvation.

Even of those who habitually hear the Scriptures read, and perhaps read them themselves, how few are there who seem to have any clear and definite idea of "what" they "must do to be saved"—of God's way of peace, God's way of holiness, God's path to glory! Truly precious, then, are those few moments in each day, when the members and servants of a household are brought together to hear about the "one thing needful," and to seek together, in that little interval of stillness, for pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace; for more knowledge of a Saviour, for comfort under sorrow, relief under pain, strength under temptation, and for daily preservation and blessing, both in the things of time and of eternity!

The author of the following comments desires to convey some streams of living water to those who are thirsty: to speak "a word in season to him that is weary:" to lead others to that "fulness of joy," that unutterable satisfaction and rest of heart and soul which experience only can realize, which Heaven's teaching alone can impart, and which, as the world can never give it, so the world can never take it away.

May all these results be fully realized in this effort to glorify Him on Whose head are many crowns, and Who will not forget even the cup of cold water offered, in His name, to those for whom He has died!

G. V. CHICHESTER,

Rector of Wotton, Surrey.

March, 1884.

BIBLE THOUGHTS FOR DAILY LIFE.

ST. MARK I. 1-8.

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God ;

2. As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

3. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

5. And there went out unto him all the land of Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

6. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins ; and he did eat locusts and wild honey ;

7. And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

8. I indeed have baptized you with water ; but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

ST. JOHN the Baptist is here introduced to us as one of God's own messengers. His words were strong and clear and simple ; sin and pardon were the burden of his sermons.

God's messages to man have been the same ever since the Fall,—“ Prepare ye,” has been His command to all who work in His Vineyard ; “ Repent and believe ” is the keynote of that preparation. The results lie in God's hands, but if we wish to be His messengers we must learn a lesson from John the Baptist, we must be content to be but a “ Voice,” and seek only to repeat the gospel call in simple Bible words. Many opportunities are given to each of us of passing on God's messages: in the quiet walk with some companion ; in the Bible reading with a beginner in the Christian race, or in any of the numerous ways which open themselves to us if we watch for them, we can prepare the way of the Lord. Are we doing this ? Do we try to make straight His paths ? And above all, do we, in our own spiritual life,

remove the hindrances to His grace? The evil tempers, the worldly thoughts, the bad habits—do we try to clear them away, not in our own strength but in our Master's? There was no extravagance or even publicity in St. John's beginning. He began his service in the wilderness, but his earnestness and reality soon attracted many listeners; and these he baptized, as the seal of their adoption into that great army, whose ranks we too have joined and whose vows are upon us.

ST. MARK I. 9-13.

9. And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

10. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him;

11. And there came a voice from heaven, *saying*, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

12. And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

13. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

OUR Lord's companions in the desert were the wild beasts and the angels. How often it is with ourselves that the worst temptations come when we are alone. God intends that we should all pass through temptation in many forms and under many aspects, but only for the purpose of strengthening our spiritual life, and fixing our hold more firmly on the Rock of Ages. Just as the hardy oak and the slender birch can each bear unharmed the rough winds of winter and the bitter blasts of the yearly storms, because their roots securely grasp the soil beneath, and even strike a deeper hold because of these storms, so does the child of God get strength from the unseen world by more and more securely fixing his heart on the invisible within the veil, and as the blasts of temptation assail him, he will be driven closer to the Refuge¹ which will never fail in the day of trouble. Neither Satan nor the wild beasts can harm those to whom the angels, that is God's messengers,

¹ Isa. iv. 6.

minister. How can this ministry be ours? In the thirty-fourth Psalm we have a very plain declaration made to us through God's Holy Spirit on this subject: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." Again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are told that they are God's "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

ST. MARK I. 14-18.

14. Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.

15. And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the gospel.

16. Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

17. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

18. And straightway they forsook their nets and followed him.

THE beginning of this chapter shews us John's popularity, but his preaching was soon put an end to by the tyranny of Herod. John was cast into prison, and the multitude who had so eagerly sought and followed him were left, as they thought, without spiritual teaching and guidance. How often is this the case with ourselves. We lean on the special help of some guide, or the sympathy of a religious friend, and suddenly, through no fault of ours, God takes our guide away. But this is the time when the Lord Jesus speaks even more directly and personally to our souls, as He did to His first disciples—"Come ye after Me."

It is the glory of our reformed Church that the sinner and the Saviour can meet alone and plead together. Whatever makes our religion more of a personal matter between ourselves and Jesus Christ, is a blessing and a gain. If on our upward road to heaven God sees that we are serving Him in our own way, rather than in His—leaning on the means instead of looking to the end, He will step in, and apparently—for a time—block up our path. It is only when we have

learnt to trust our souls to Him, in simple childlike faith, that His strong Hand will carry us over the difficulties into the green pastures where we can listen quietly to our Father's Voice. The great and strong wind may rend the mountains and break the rocks in pieces, the earthquake and the fire have their own destroying mission, but to the soul which stands as Elijah did, by God's command, upon the mount far away from all earthly helper, no harm or loss can come. "Come ye after Me and I will make you"—whatever our Master sees is best for us to be. Let our prayer ever be that nothing of self-will may hinder the work of Christ in our hearts, but that we may be ready, as were Simon and Andrew, to give up our worldly interests at the Master's call.

ST. MARK I. 19, 20.

19. And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.

20. And straightway he called them: and they

left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

JESUS was walking by the Sea of Galilee when He called James and John. It sounds so simple, so like our daily life. We often read of the walks of our Lord. Might we not try to gather some holy thoughts in our walks, as He did in His? Probably he recalled the hour when the "gathering together of the waters" was called, when God saw that it was good.¹ No storms and no thoughts of terror were then connected with the fathomless sea. The sand which was placed by God's perpetual decree² for the bound of the ocean, how often in the patriarchal days had God used it as an emblem of His promises.

Most of the familiar objects in nature are alluded to in the Bible, either by the prophets or by our Lord; they are constantly made use of to illustrate some great practical or spiritual truth. Do we think of these connections when we gaze upon the varied beauty God daily spreads before our eyes? How often these things are brought before us,

¹ Gen. i. 10.

² Jer. v. 22.

either in sermons, or in books. They are not meant to be only thought of for a moment and then forgotten, we should treasure them up in our minds, and by the help of what we learn in this way we must try to spell out for ourselves the deep and varied lessons which God has written on all His works. Cultivating holy thoughts can alone defend us from impure or idle ones; many persons are the prey to "thoughts of foolishness," which Solomon declares to be "sin."³ We cannot root them out, but by planting in good and interesting thoughts we can, with God's help, change the whole nature of our minds and make the silent voices of His wonderful acts speak to us, for if "the Lord give the word the company of preachers is great"⁴ indeed.

ST. MARK I. 21-28.

21. And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

22. And they were astonished at his doctrine:

³ Prov. xxiv. 9.

⁴ Ps. lxviii. 11. Prayer-book Version.

for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

23. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

24. Saying, let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

25. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

26. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

27. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

28. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

SIN is more refined now than it was eighteen hundred years ago, but it is as real as ever. The devil knows that he himself must conform to the changes of the age, and he adopts varying forms of deceit to suit the fashion of the world. We are nowhere told in God's Word that He has put an end to the unclean spirits; rather may we *infer that* Satan has only changed his plans

and ways of attack; the devils whose name are still legion, are as active as they ever were, but outwardly their power is restricted; and as we know that sin and iniquity abound and will abound until the end, we can only suppose that Satan works more secretly, and therefore more dangerously, than of old.

But let us remember that whether our temptations come from within, or from without, Jesus Christ has the same authority over them now as He had when on earth, and in His own appointed way of seeking Him in prayer will our deliverance come. It was in the synagogue that the unclean spirit was bidden to come out of the man, and it is when we take our sins and infirmities and temptations into the very presence of Christ, that we shall find our help is laid upon One Who is mighty to save¹.

ST. MARK I. 29-33.

29. And forthwith when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

¹ Isa. lxiii. 1.

30. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.

31. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

32. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

33. And all the city was gathered together at the door.

WE wonder sometimes why trouble is allowed to darken our family life. The one who has ministered to us, whose life was so useful as well as so dear to us, is stricken down, and we can do nothing; we have no word of command to bid the fever cease; but Jesus is "the same yesterday, to-day and for ever¹," and He will listen when we tell Him of the trouble.

Sickness and death come so directly from the Hand of God, that it is always intended that we should ask ourselves, Why is this sent? The purpose is generally very easily read. We can well imagine how St. Peter's faith was established by our Lord's visit to

¹ Heb. xiii. 8.

his home in this time of trouble, and his love to his Master intensified.

We too may learn lessons of living faith by studying this miracle, for as strength and power were immediately restored to this woman by the touch of Jesus, so will it be with our mortal bodies when the resurrection morning breaks. His voice will be the first we shall hear, and all taint of earth and its infirmities will immediately vanish; we shall be raised up with glorious bodies; with powers of fresh service and ministry given to us. Such is to be the resurrection of the children of God. Who does not wish to be of that happy company? "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them²."

ST. MARK I. 34-39.

34. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

35. And in the morning, rising up a great while

² Rev. xiv. 13.

before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

36. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.

37. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All *men* seek for thee.

38. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

39. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

WE see in these verses what our Lord did with His quiet hours, as well as with His busy ones. The solitary place He turned into a sanctuary, the town into a pulpit; work and prayer made up the fabric of His life, the warp and the woof running through all, and the perfect pattern formed.

Let us copy the outlines, with God's help, as closely as we can, for is not the Lord's life an example to all? He had lonely hours, in which He talked with his Father; and busy hours spent among men and women, doing good to all, helping and healing, teaching the ignorant, and doing the work which God had given Him to do. Our Lord's work was very varied, but the motive

was always the same—the good of humanity and the glory of God. This was the secret of His wonderful patience and forbearance. The interruptions of His communion with His Father were only turned by Him into ways of fresh service. “I came,” He said, “not to do My own will”; and because there was no self in our Lord’s purpose and plans, we read of no impatience in His spirit when His privacy was intruded upon. He was ready at any time to go wherever a sinner or a sufferer called Him, and He is still the “same Jesus”—near unto all that seek Him, for He Himself has said, “I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.”

ST. MARK I. 40-45.

40. And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

41. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth *his* hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will: be thou clean.

42. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away ;

44. And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man : but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for the cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

45. But he went out, and began to publish *it* much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

IN these verses we have a very important lesson on the duty of gratitude, or thankfulness, from the lips of our Lord Himself. He commands this poor leper, after he had healed him, to offer things for a testimony.

We are far too apt to leave our gratitude in the charge of feelings, which enter the mind but make no permanent impression there, and as every good feeling will starve itself out for want of practical purpose, so surely will our thankfulness for deliverance from sickness, or pain, end in nothing, unless we recognise the sacred duty of gratitude.

Our Lord after healing this leper, told him at once to go and do something. Let this

be our rule. First of all and chiefly we must shew ourselves unto our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, and come boldly unto the throne of grace. Then let us give some offering unto our God, not as a payment but as a tribute and privilege.

How many deliverances from sickness or danger has each of us experienced? Have the tokens of our gratitude been at all proportioned to our mercies?

ST. MARK II. 1-12.

And again he entered into Capernaum after *some* days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive *them*, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

3. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken *it* up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

5. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7. Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

8. And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9. Whether it is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy* sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk?

10. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11. I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

IN this miracle we see how far more important Jesus thinks the soul is than the body. When He spoke the words of healing He addressed Himself not so much to the suffering manhood of the palsied being before Him as to the inheritor of immortality. But His tenderness towards the body was also immediately shown—"Arise, He

said, and take up thy bed and walk." Why, we are again and again tempted to ask ourselves, is it so no longer? Why does the loving Lord no longer cure disease with a word? Certainly the best answer to this question is, that the Christian's life is essentially one of faith; but as the conditions here are appointed by God for our discipline, so will our eternal state be His appointing also, and to us who have now to walk, not by sight but by faith, He has given, in the Book of Revelation, promises unknown to His ancient people. We are told that no pain¹ shall touch the redeemed hereafter. What a beautiful contrast is this sure promise, to the sad experience of our present life, which St. Paul describes so comprehensively: "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now²." The day shall come, when not only God's chosen ones but all created life, shall be free from every suffering, and those who love God can take to themselves the detailed comforts of this sure promise. As the power of working miracles was with-

¹ Rev. xxi. 4.

² Rom. viii. 22. .

drawn from the Church, so were the revelations of the future state made clearer, for God never takes any blessing away without storing better things for them that love Him in His home above.

ST. MARK II. 13-14.

13. And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

14. And as he passed by, he saw *Lévi* the *son* of *Alphæus* sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

IN the great picture-galleries of the city of Florence, where the masterpieces of Christian art are preserved, there is generally to be seen some artist gazing intently on the picture he is about to copy. Probably, if the original be a celebrated one, he has waited years for his turn of permission to copy it. As he gazes on the beautiful form, and tries to enter into the depth of that pure and heavenly expression, little by little—if there be the true feeling of art

within him—he makes it his own. He copies faithfully every line, the smallest details are reproduced as carefully as the central figure itself. When his copy is finished, the stamp of the gallery is affixed to it, to certify that it has been taken from the original picture. The artist will then bring it home, place it in his studio and again paint from this copy. One picture after another is thus reproduced, but these are of far less value than the first copy; they can be purchased for a much smaller sum and are always considered of inferior merit. Jesus Christ has left His perfect life as an example to each of us. “Follow Me,” is His call to all who wish to be made like Him.

We must set up no other copy before us—the best human model is full of imperfection. We must not be contented with following any guide but the Lord Jesus Himself; and as we study His words, and try to form our daily life after the holy likeness of His own, and as we “behold His face in righteousness¹” here, though “now through a glass darkly²,” we may humbly

¹ Ps. xvii. 15.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

but confidently look forward to the time when we shall be "satisfied with his likeness hereafter." "Every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself even as He is pure ³."

ST. MARK II. 15-17.

15. And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

16. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

17. When Jesus heard *it*, he saith unto them. They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

WE are called in our Christian race, not to follow a vague sentiment but a living Saviour, and one who can understand all our difficulties and hindrances. It is only as our religion takes this definite form, that we shall rise above the perplexities and con-

³ 1 John iii. 3.

traditions of life, and see things in the clear light which surrounds Christ. Do we ask ourselves—Where may I go? Is the house of feasting a fit place for me? Am I true to my colours in mixing with publicans and sinners? Yes, surely it is right for us to go where Jesus went, if we can say that we go with Him, that we honestly seek for opportunities to do His work and glorify Him. This is a far safer rule than merely to be guided by inclination or by feeling, for it is more like our Master's rule. He chose the uncongenial society of the careless and the ignorant, but He chose it to do His Father's business. It is a question which each heart must settle for itself how far it is right to mix with the world; the temptations to worldly-mindedness may be stronger than some persons feel they are able to resist, and to them the advice of our Lord is clear—"If thy right hand cause thee to offend, cut it off and cast it from thee." Others can go into society as the early disciples did to this feast of Levi, with the desire to be with their Master, and He will supply the opportunities of serving Him. Let this

be our fixed rule—Wherever we can humbly and honestly ask His presence to go with us we may safely go, but wherever we feel this to be impossible let us turn to the safer path of self-denial, hard though it may seem to be, remembering that to all who give up anything for Christ's sake, the reward is promised "an hundredfold" here, and in the world to come "eternal life."

ST. MARK II. 18-22.

18. And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

19. And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

20. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

21. No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

22. And no man putteth new wine into old

bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

OUR Lord in these words explained the spirit of His teaching, it was "new," and perhaps for this reason He selected among His first followers men whose minds were not burdened by the false teaching and vain traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees. These simple fishermen would compare the doctrine of their Master with His life, and be guided as much by what they saw as by what they heard. The old garment of Judaism was worn out, the whole cloth wanted to be made new, but it was to be a gradual work, and to come from within, from the influence of a few solitary hearts and lives touched with the power of the Holy Ghost. The Saviour's plan of reformation and redemption was a quiet and unobtrusive one; there was to be no bursting of the bottles, no spilling of the wine, no rending of the garment. Gradually and silently the old crumbling fabric of the ceremonial law was to give place to the

spiritual law, but faith and fellowship with Christ, not excitement, were to be the means of this change. It was to the hearts of men and women that Jesus ever turned; the Holy Spirit working within was to cause the outward change, and this could only be done by the grace of God. A good deal of light is thrown on these verses by comparing them with the passage in St. Luke's Gospel where the seven wicked spirits enter into the man's heart¹. He had driven out the one bad spirit, but had called in no good to fill the vacant place ; and in like manner our Lord shews his disciples that not only must the bottles be new, but the wine which fills them must be new also, the outward and the inward must correspond. Let us remember this most important truth, and ask our heavenly Father to give us that spiritual and hidden grace which can alone make our hearts new and influence our actions.

¹ Luke xi. 26.

ST. MARK II. 23-28.

23. And it came to pass, that he went through the cornfields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

24. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

25. And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him?

26. How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

27. And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

28. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

OUR Lord in these verses asserts His dignity and His authority. He tells the Pharisees that He is Lord of the Sabbath, and silences them by a reference to the Old Testament story of what David did when he was an hungered. Neither directly nor indirectly do we ever read in our Lord's history that He sided with those who judged

the actions of others. If He who knew the thoughts of men did not do so, how can we dare to judge others? Our Lord often rebuked sin, and spoke with great plainness to the sinner, but, except in the case of the Pharisees' hypocrisy, He never judged on earth. It is the motive and intention which in His sight are of paramount importance, and He would teach us that it is often more wrong to find fault and to judge, than to break some rule or omit some ordinance. To remember this would help us much in a right observance of the Sabbath; it is the Lord's Day—then we admit that the day belongs to Him—and He lends it to us to use, not for our pleasure but for His glory. And, on the other hand, we should remember that the Lord of the Sabbath is no hard task-master, but our loving Father and best Friend. He who walked through the waving cornfields of Judæa, Lord of all nature's varying beauty, and for whose pleasure all things were and are created, will never condemn as "unlawful" what can elevate the heart to hold communion with Himself. All the beauty which lies around

us is part of the glory of God, and we miss the communion of His invisible spirits when we withhold our part of praise to the Creator of heaven and earth¹. Let David's prayer be ours also: "Let the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer."

ST. MARK III. 1-12.

1. And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

2. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.

3. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

4. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

5. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched *it* out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

¹ Ps. cxlviii.

6. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

7. But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judæa,

8. And from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

9. And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

10. For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

11. And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

12. And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

OUR Lord's plan of teaching was constantly varied. The cornfields and the sea side were exchanged for the synagogue. Every place and every circumstance was used by Him for the glory of God and the good of men's souls. Well may St. Peter, who in his Epistles often seems to refer to what he saw

his Master do, when he attended His ministry in Galilee, write: "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts," for if the heart be a sanctuary, the life and example will be holy wherever we may be.

The miracle here mentioned of healing the man with the withered hand, was done under much the same circumstances as that on the palsied man at Capernaum. Jesus was in the synagogue, probably intent on teaching, but ready as ever to apply His divine power in a personal manner. Let us remember this when we are tried by the thought that our usefulness is "withered." Christ can renew it at His will, only the intercourse with Him must be close and personal. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint¹."

ST. MARK III. 13-19.

13. And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth *unto him* whom he would: and they came unto him.

¹ Isa. xl. 31.

14. And he ordained twelve that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

15. And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils :

16. And Simon he surnamed Peter ;

17. And James the *son* of Zebedee, and John the brother of James ; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder :

18. And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the *son* of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, and Simon the Canaanite,

19. And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him : and they went into an house.

ALL these men were followers of our Lord : some of them had before been specially called by Him. Now He ordained them that they should be with Him, and that "He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils." Of their preaching and healing sickness and casting out devils, we hear very little until after our Lord's Resurrection. These things were to be altogether subservient to the "being with Him ;" this was their preparation for higher service. Jesus did not only choose workers of one type,

or of one character, to labour in His vineyard. He called these men to be with Him, as He now calls us, just as we are, for He and He alone is able to make us "perfect and complete in all the will of God¹." It is very interesting to notice how slow and gradual was the development of spirituality in the Apostles. But the first and indispensable step was complete surrender to Jesus. "They forsook all and followed Him;" and so with ourselves, the choice must be made between Christ and the world. At the close of our Lord's ministry, when these same disciples were to be scattered every man to his own, Jesus urged them again and again to abide in Him. As they had been His companions on earth, so were they to abide in Him, by virtue of that spiritual communion which is accessible to all.—"He that abideth in Me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without Me ye can do nothing."

¹ Col. iv. 12.

ST. MARK III. 20-30.

20. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

21. And when his friends heard *of it*, they went out to lay hold on him; for they said, He is beside himself.

22. And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

23. And he called them *unto him*, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

24. And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

25. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

26. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

27. No man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

28. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:

29. But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.

30. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

OUR Lord's "friends." Let us pause and think what the word means. We read much about His enemies, what they did and said, but here we meet with His friends, or, as the margin puts it, his "kinsmen." At one time or another of our life, God has given us all the opportunity to make friends, how do we fulfil our trust? Do we encourage, or do we hinder, the good which our friend would wish to do? From His friends our Lord met with no help at the beginning of His ministry, and no support at the close. He knows well what it is to be forsaken. He can sympathise with us if we are lonely. But let us always remember that others whom we meet in the daily intercourse of life may be lonely too, and if we are God's servants, we should try to cheer their path by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God¹.

When the Scribes attributed our Lord's power over the unclean spirits to Satan, we read how He taught them by parables, that evil can never cast out evil. This question has a very deep meaning. Sometimes we

¹ 2 Cor. i. 4.

find ourselves entangled in wrong; some bad habit or evil desire has gradually thrown its coils around us so closely that we feel as if we cannot escape; we think that because we are indulging some sin, not maybe outwardly, but as our conscience tells us—in God's presence—we must therefore continue in sin. We have entered upon a path of deception, and we must continue to deceive; we long to recover our lost ground, we want to return to the paths of uprightness, but we dare not run the risk of exposure. Let us then remember the words of our Lord. Good alone can cast out evil, if we turn to truth and uprightness God will be on our side and the victory is sure. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and He shall be my son."²

ST. MARK III. 31-35.

31. There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

32. And the multitude sat about him, and they

² Rev. xxi. 7.

said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

33. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?

34. And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

35. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

WE have in these verses one of the most precious and wonderful promises of our Lord. Like all His best promises it is unlimited in its full and free offer—"Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother." By the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit, and by virtue of this promise of our Lord, these words have their fulfilment even here.

Our share in the Divine attributes of God, in this life at all events, is very partial: of His omniscience and power and wisdom we cannot partake; but we are allowed not only fully to enjoy His love, but are also given His help to copy that love unreservedly¹. We often say the words, "Thy will be done"

¹ 1 John iv. 12, 13.

Do we as often ask ourselves the all-important question, "Am I doing God's will?" Are we each one of us trying honestly not only to submit to God's holy will, but actively to do it?

He has ordered our lives, and placed us where we are, and it is in the daily life that God's will and not our own must be done. If we are thus seeking to please Him, we, who may be friendless and unknown, may feel that our brotherhood is with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory Himself. Should not this thought be the strongest incentive possible to elevate our aspirations and to purify our hearts?

ST. MARK IV. 1-20.

1. And he began again to teach by the sea side : and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea ; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

2. And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

3. Hearken ; Behold, there went out a sower to sow :

4. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

5. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth ; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth :

6. But when the sun was up, it was scorched ; and because it had no root, it withered away.

7. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

8. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased ; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

9. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

10. And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

11. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God : but unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables :

12. That seeing they may see, and not perceive ; and hearing they may hear, and not understand ; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them.

13. And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable ? and how then will ye know all parables ?

14. The sower soweth the word.

15. And these are they by the way side, when the word is sown ; but, when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

16. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground ; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness ;

17. And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time : afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

18. And these are they which are sown among thorns ; such as hear the word,

19. And the cares of this world, and deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

20. And these are they which are sown on good ground ; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

OUR Lord gives His own explanation of this beautiful parable : we have only to study His words and to ask ourselves to which class of hearers do we belong ?

We should observe with what reality our Lord speaks of Satan, and what watchful vigilance He attributes to Him. "When

they have heard, Satan cometh, immediately."

We must arm ourselves against his approach, for come to us all he will, and that 'immediately' after we have heard the word.

But although no precaution on our part can prevent his coming to tempt us, we must remember that we can be more than conquerors through Christ Who loved us. We must expect his assaults, in the form of temptation from within or from without, and not be discouraged because that even in our holiest and most earnest efforts he will assail us. "Be vigilant," says St. Peter, "because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour, whom resist stedfast in the faith.¹"

ST. MARK IV. 21-25.

21. And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

22. For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

¹ 1 Peter v. 8, 9.

23. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

24. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.

25. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

THIS goes to the very root of our religious life. Is our religion a light? a guide—not for ourselves only, but also for others?

“There is nothing hid which shall not be manifested.” What a glorious fact is here revealed. Not our life only, but this whole world is full of hidden things, which baffle our powers of observation and our knowledge at every turn. The best treasures of God’s creation are hidden, but only for a little while; the lavish abundance of God’s works will one day serve as a field of training and education to those who shall hereafter be with Him where He is. Let us accustom our minds to expect great things from God in nature as well as in grace. God will measure to us as we mete to ourselves; even here below the light shines more clearly as we follow on to know the

Lord,¹ and surely to the mind that exercises itself in the study of God's glory in creation as well as in redemption, shall more and more be given. The subject is a boundless one, and well calculated to lead us continually into those vast regions of self-improvement and knowledge which shew us even on their surface something of the glory of God. "Hereafter," said our Lord, "ye shall see heaven open."²

ST. MARK IV. 26-34.

26. And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground ;

27. And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

28. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself ; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

29. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come.

30. And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God ? or with what comparison shall we compare it ?

¹ Hosea vi. 3.

² John i. 51.

31. *It is* like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth :

32. But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches ; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

33. And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.

34. But without a parable spake he not unto them : and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

THESE first verses are a lesson on progress—the blade, the ear, the full corn. The Christian's course is a gradual development. As the husbandman rejoices in the promise of the strong blade, and carefully watches the varying weather, which will so greatly influence the growing corn, so does our loving Lord watch every degree of our spiritual growth. The changing circumstances which He sends to us are but meant to perfect the Christian graces of His spirit. The work of His sickle may often be sharp but His Hand guides it, and He in whose keeping the harvest lies will store each sheaf for everlasting joy.

We read in the 34th verse, "When He was

alone He expounded all things to His disciples." The many parables which lie all around us can only be explained in private communion with our Saviour. The silent moments spent with Him in prayer and meditation will throw their light across many a dark or busy hour, and will spiritualise the commonest actions. So shall the eyes of our understanding be opened, and "God the Father of glory shall give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him¹."

ST. MARK IV. 35-41.

35. And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

36. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was into the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

37. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

38. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

¹ Eph. i. 17.

39. And he arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

40. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

41. And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

“MASTER, carest thou not?” is the natural cry of our heart in all time of trouble. David uttered it long ago. “Why standest thou so far off, O Lord?¹ Why hidest Thou Thyself in times of trouble?” And Satan, who was a liar from the beginning, ever tries to make us think that God is far off. It is he who whispers doubting thoughts to the troubled spirit; but Jesus says, “The very hairs of your head are all numbered.²”

The storm will rise, and the waves beat even into the ship; trouble and sorrow may be all around us, but one cry direct to the Master will bring Him to our side, and if we listen for His voice we too shall hear the blessed words, “Peace, be still.” The storm came upon the fisher boat though the Son of

¹ Ps. x. 1.

² Matt. x. 30.

God was there, the waves filled the ship, and death without the martyr's crown threatened the disciples. In a moment all was changed, a great calm succeeded the great storm, and from henceforth the loving followers of Jesus knew Him as the "Prince of Peace."³ Well might St. Peter write to the early converts when recalling to his own mind in after years the anxious question—"Master, carest thou not?" Well might he confidently write, "He careth for you."⁴

Outward and visible things were preparing in the disciples' minds the way for spiritual truths, which deepened ever more and more in our Lord's intercourse with the men whom He had chosen. Could He give peace with a word? Had they not seen Him do it?

What force was there in His last words of encouragement, "These things have I spoken unto you that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."⁵

³ Isa. ix. 6.

⁴ 1 Peter v. 7.

⁵ John xvi. 33.

ST. MARK V. 1-10.

And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

2. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there meet him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

3. Who had *his* dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

4. Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any *man* tame him.

5. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

6. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

7. And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, *thou* Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

8. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, *thou* unclean spirit.

9. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name *is* Legion: for we are many.

10. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

THERE is much that is mysterious in this story, but we can gather great instruction from its salient points. This poor sufferer's life changed in every respect from the moment when "he saw Jesus afar off, and worshipped Him." In one of our beautiful Collects, we pray that the pitifulness of Christ's mercy may loose us, though we are tied and bound with the chain of our sins; and in this passage of Scripture we see the way in which Jesus will receive and answer such a prayer.

Along the broad road that leads to destruction lie many dark and secret passages of despair, but let the struggling soul see Jesus even "afar off," and worship Him however ignorantly, however feebly, the Lord will hear.

He has said, in His word, to the weak and feeble, "Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me and he *shall* make peace with me¹." The power of Satan is very great, and no human strength can tame the soul which is in his grasp. It is he who suggests dark hard thoughts of God.

He whispers to the soul who is in his cruel bondage, and yet longs to be free, that God's service will be "a torment"; but God is stronger than Satan, and He has said, "Whosoever cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." God calls the sinner in his sins. He alone can command the unclean spirit to depart; but let the sinner's cry arise where it may, He will hear, and He will help.

ST. MARK V. 11-21.

11. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

12. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

13. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

14. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what was done.

15. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion,

sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

16. And they that saw *it* told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and *also* concerning the swine.

17. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

18. And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

19. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

20. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all *men* did marvel.

21. And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea.

It was contrary to the Jewish law to keep swine. In the Book of Leviticus we read, "Of their flesh ye shall not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch¹." If we transgress God's commandments, His judgments will fall upon us, we may think that we are prospering and gathering store upon store;

¹ Lev. xi. 8.

the swine—that is, the forbidden possession—may increase to two thousand; but sooner or later it will perish before our very eyes. “The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it ².”

We read in the fourteenth verse how the new disciple prayed Jesus that he might be with Him. Surely no position could be safer or better than following his Lord—will not Jesus grant his wish? “Jesus suffered him not.” The Lord seeth not as man seeth, His loving Eye rested not only on the new-born Christian, but on the wandering sheep of his friends and family. “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee.”

How often does God send us back, for the sake of others, into the very places we had wished to leave. Are we placed by God’s providence where we feel surrounded by hindrances to growth in grace? We must remember that if servants of God, we are “Workers together with Him.” His people must not only be light in the world but salt and leaven—the example of a holy life, the

² Prov. x. 22.

influence of daily familiar contact, the personal intercourse, can do much to lead others to "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world."

ST. MARK V. 22-34.

22. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name: and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,

23. And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death, *I pray thee*, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

24. And *Jesus* went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.

25. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

26. And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,

27. When she had heard of *Jesus*, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

28. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

29. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt it in *her* body that she was healed of that plague.

30. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

31. And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

32. And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

33. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

34. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

IN the early part of this chapter we read the prayer of the Gadarenes that Jesus should "depart" from them. Here we read of one who besought him earnestly to "come" to his troubled home, and in the next verse we have the simple words, "Jesus went with him." All will henceforth be well in that ruler's house. Jesus has gone with him, the "same Jesus" Who is ever ready to hear the call of whoever cries unto Him for help.

On the way to the ruler's house, a woman long time afflicted, pressed with the crowd

around the Saviour. Her heart was full of desire and faith, and the touch of faith was immediately felt by Christ. He drew out her public confession, and publicly he confirmed the blessing. When much people follow Him now in the crowded church or the thronged meeting, does He not still ask the same question, "Who touched me?" Who has had the real personal intercourse with the great Healer? All are suffering from the plague of sin, which, if left to itself, will spread and grow worse as time passes on. The blood of Jesus Christ can alone cleanse us from all sin. He knows well who touches Him. He alone can say, "Go in peace."

ST. MARK V. 35-43.

35. While he yet spake there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?

36. As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

37. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

38. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.

39. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.

40. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

41. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.

42. And straightway the damsel arose and walked; for she was *of the age* of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

43. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

WHAT an effort it must have been for this father to leave his dying child's bedside. Jesus felt for him, and He kept up his faith by the strong words of encouragement, "Be not afraid, only believe."

Throughout the whole of this story we see

the tender mercies of Christ—how He took the child's father and mother with Him into the room—how He commanded that something should be given her to eat ; in all these details we see the Saviour as our Friend and Elder Brother. In this touching story we may read the foreshadowing of that great day when those we have loved on earth shall hear the Voice of the Son of Man saying "Arise."

Hereafter the same Hand which led this child back to her mortal life will guide our beloved to meet us, and together shall all the redeemed of God, who have died in the Lord, meet in that land where sin and sorrow are unknown. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." "Wherefore comfort one another with these words¹."

ST. MARK VI. 1-6.

And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

2. And when the sabbath day was come, he

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 14, 18.

began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing *him* were astonished, saying, From whence hath this *man* these things? and what wisdom *is* this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

3. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

4. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

5. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed *them*.

6. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

How unreasonable and inconsequent are the arguments of unbelievers.

It is the same in every age; if pride fills the heart, even the teaching of Christ Himself will do no good. These Galilean hearers admitted the wisdom and the mighty works, but they could not reconcile the lowly birth and the humble industry with such teaching; so they were offended at Him. Let us always pray, before we enter God's House,

for teachable humble hearts; there is quite as much need for our own individual preparation as for that of God's ministers. The sower soweth the word, but prayer must soften the ground; quiet earnest prayer before we hear, or else we can expect no blessing. The good which we gain from religious teaching is in proportion to the blessing we ask. If we go to hear the preaching of God's Word in a spirit of criticism, or out of curiosity—"From whence hath this man these things?"—we shall gain no benefit, but bring down upon ourselves the convicting judgment pronounced against those who heard the word, and who knew the will of God, but did it not. Let us also beware of the danger of despising or neglecting the teaching or example of any who may be familiar to us—any who are of our own household or intimate acquaintance. The good influence of others is from God Himself. He will nowhere leave Himself without a witness, and ours will be the condemnation if feelings of envy or of jealousy arise, to mar the good which others might have done us. Rather let us encourage the companion in whom we see the love of God

taking root, let us not criticise the good, but foster it, and above all pray to God to use it for His own glory. Not all can do the "mighty works," nor can all speak the "words of wisdom"; but the carpenter's lowly home-life, and the patient bearing of uncongenial companions—these are examples which all can try to copy, remembering that the footsteps of our Lord are to be our guide through every circumstance, and in every condition of life.

ST. MARK VI. 7-13.

7. And he called *unto him* the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

8. And commanded them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in *their* purse:

9. But *be* shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.

10. And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.

11. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them.

Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

12. And they went out, and preached that men should repent.

13. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed *them*.

For some time past, our Lord had shown His disciples what was His method of dealing with the souls and the bodies of men. The village teaching was fresh in their minds, as was also the rejection of their Master by His own countrymen.

They had seen Him unwearied in doing good, ever ready to follow the call of any who wanted Him. They had heard the words of love and pity to the sorrowing, and the words of power which caused death to give up its prey. And now He sent them forth to be publicly recognized, by their open ministry, as His followers. "By two and two" He sent them, that they might help and encourage each other; and we know that theirs was a friendship which endured until death. "Two and two." Who then was appointed as Judas' companion? Was it the

devoted John, or the eager Peter? We cannot tell. St. John says that Judas was a thief, and that covetousness was the motive which led him to betray his Master, but we know that the eleven passed untainted through the ordeal of his companionship, for immediately after our Lord's Ascension we read that they had all things in common¹. As the apostles had a Judas for their companion, so may we also have our principles tried by those whom God has appointed to be with us; but if we are sent this trial, whilst in the path of duty, God will keep us from harm—"He is able." But if we voluntarily choose for our friends the ungodly and the worldly, we may be sure that God will not bless that friendship, and that harm to ourselves, and sorrow, will come from it².

ST. MARK VI. 14-20.

14. And king Herod heard *of him*; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

¹ Acts ii. 44.

² 1 Cor. 15, 33.

15. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.

16. But when Herod heard *thereof*, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded : he is risen from the dead.

17. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife : for he had married her.

18. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

19. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him ; but she could not :

20. For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him ; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

WHAT a strange character was Herod's. He believed in the resurrection of the dead, and we read that he heard John gladly, and did many things when he heard him. The choice was given him between the holy John and the wicked Herodias. A personal message was sent to him, and Herod's conscience was ill at ease, but he would not turn from his sins, nor give up his life of wicked pleasure. Herod had tried, and successfully, to silence his reprover in this world, but he had added

one more witness against him to that cloud-army who will meet us all at the Judgment Day. Has no secret sin of ours ever been condemned by God's messengers? Have we never had a personal message? Nay, has not our conscience often echoed back the warning voice in the watches of the night, or in the moment of peril, when, as we thought, the accident must prove fatal, and we were about to be sent, all unprepared, into the presence of our God? The burden of John's sermons was repentance and remission of sins. God has joined these together, let no man put them asunder. The day will come when that message will be given no more, when the voice of warning and the voice of forgiveness will be silent for ever, and they who would not listen to God's offers on earth must meet Him as their Judge. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly."

ST. MARK VI. 20.

20. For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him; and

when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

WE are sometimes led, as was Herod, by our *feelings*, some little distance along the narrow way; we hear the word gladly and do many things, but this is not enough; this guide will fail us suddenly, and we shall turn aside, as did Herod. It is only the voice of God's Holy Spirit, speaking through our conscience, that is our true guide. It is the heart, not the conscience, which the Bible tells us is deceitful. "The Spirit of man is the candle of the Lord."¹ Our conscience may be weak, and we can overrule and stifle its voice, but its power is only silenced, not gone. Can they whose sins are not blotted out by the blood of Christ, who have never fled to Him for refuge, have any sterner or more terrible judge than this strange, mysterious, voice—this spirit of truth which is able to bring back from the long-forgotten pages of our history every word and every action—not only to recall the past, but also to convince us of its truth—not only to set before us the

¹ Prov. xx. 27.

things we have done, but to silence every rising excuse, and to strip every false plea from the sin? This will be torture unendurable, ourselves made terrible to ourselves. One power alone can silence this voice, the mighty love of Christ, which through the Spirit maketh intercession for us according to the will of God. His blood will not only save those who come to Him, but will blot out their transgressions². May God grant to each of us so to lay hold on Him by saving faith, that conscience may be to us not a condemning voice but a guide and a help; and as we bid farewell to earth and its troubled scenes, we may rest assured that its condemning voice will never more be heard by us, its warning tones we shall need no more, and its former judgments will all be set aside by Him Who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ.

ST. MARK VI. 21-29.

21. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief *estates* of Galilee;

22. And when the daughter of the said Herodias

² Heb. ix. 14; x. 22.

came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give *it* thee.

23. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give *it* thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

24. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

25. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

26. And the king was exceeding sorry: *yet* for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

27. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,

28. And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.

29. And when his disciples heard *of it*, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

“THE friendship of the world worketh death.” Herod promised as a King—
“Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me I will give

it thee." This is still the glittering and delusive offer of the world to its favourites. It is heard in every station of life; for Satan's promises have rung down the ages of time since first he beguiled Eve with the words, "Ye shall be as Gods." It is the same cry now as it was then, false and hollow, but how fatally alluring to the young who have not yet made their choice. "Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me," says the world, "I will give it thee." What value would such an offer have on our deathbed? On the other hand, have we no promise of good things? Has not Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He will give it you."¹ Whose promise shall we trust? which of the "whatsoevers" shall be ours?—Christ's or the world's? If it ever should be our lot to watch a soul who on the threshold of life is tempted by the world's delusive offer—"Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee"—let us strive earnestly to shew them the truth, never disguising the reality of temptation, nor the fascination of pleasure. It is a fearful responsibility to hear the question, "What

¹ John xv. 16.

shall I ask?" and although each must answer for himself, we can help or hinder others according as we ourselves have chosen. Let us say as did Moses to his brother-in-law—"We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you; come thou, with us, and we will do thee good."²

ST. MARK VI. 30.

30. And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

WE have here an instance of true confession. It is strange that in our prayers we are far more inclined to tell Jesus of our feelings than of our actions; but to tell Him what we have done will set our actions in a far truer light. We read in God's word that "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding, not only the evil, but also the good."¹ At the same time that we confess to Jesus all our sins and imperfections and our omissions of duty; we may also tell Him of our wish to

² Num. x. 29.¹ Prov. xv. 3.

please Him—of our better actions and efforts after holiness; and we can find encouragement in the thought that as a Father pitieth his children so does the Lord pity them that fear Him.

If we honestly try to serve Him, and trust entirely to Christ's sacrifice for our salvation, we may have the happiness of feeling that our efforts are accepted by God, not for any merit in ourselves, but by virtue of the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. This feeling, more than any other, will encourage us onward, for failure or success is nothing in the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. He looks at the motive, and the motive alone, of our actions, and He is able to make all consequences work together for good to them who love Him.

How often in some circumstance of difficulty have we found this to be the case—we have honestly prayed before our choice was made, and wished to do as we ought, and yet, from some error of judgment, things have turned out the very reverse of what we hoped, and we seem to have brought a curse and not a blessing upon ourselves. Let this not shake our faith.

The wish to please God has ascended up to Him, and He will give us the exceeding great reward of His approval. He teaches us for our profit; and though our mistakes are often followed, as we think, by disastrous consequences, no mention of these mistakes will be made at the great day of reckoning. Is not God's promise even beyond this—"They also that erred in judgment shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine."²

ST. MARK VI. 31, 32.

31. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

32. And they departed into the desert place by ship privately.

How considerate was our Lord's treatment of these his first disciples. "He remembereth our frame," and rest is one of the blessings He keeps in store for His people. He knows that after any specially busy time of service, not only is the quiet of some desert place, or

² Isa. xxix. 24.

the silent chamber, necessary to refresh us, but that we must also have the personal communion with Himself. Our service must be sanctified by intercourse with Christ, otherwise we should become absorbed in our work, to the exclusion of our Master—we could not grow in grace. Although active service has ever been found more conducive to true religion than merely a contemplative life, each must bear its part in our training. It is at the feet of Jesus that His teaching is learnt. The traveller who wishes to find his way in a large foreign city, if utterly ignorant of the language, has two helps which he soon learns to depend on implicitly—his map and his compass. They will direct him through the complicated streets to any quarter, no matter how distant. He studies his map, and notes carefully in what direction lies the gallery, or the museum, which he wishes to see, whether it is east or north, south or west, and then he consults the unerring needle of his compass. This will be a clear and sufficient guide, and regardless of the numerous streets which cross his path, he steadily follows the pointing of his compass. If he gets confused as the

streets intersect each other, he must stand perfectly still and let the trembling needle remind him of his way, nor must he even try to hurry its teaching. Impatience will retard him; for only when the compass lies flat and steady will the needle point true; it will give no trustworthy indication if hurriedly taken up and glanced at. So in our Christian journey—the Bible is our guide-book and the Holy Spirit our compass. Our plan of life must be made out by studying the precepts which God has written down for us, and the Holy Spirit's guidance will shew us the right way. But that still small voice cannot be heard if the heart is distracted by the things of this world, nor will a hasty glance suffice to reveal the heavenly things which can only be spiritually discerned. Do we wish heartily and honestly to follow that unerring guide? Then must we quiet our hearts and minds in prayer: "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left."¹

¹ Isa. xxx. 21.

ST. MARK VI. 33-44.

33. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.

34. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

35. And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed:

36. Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.

37. He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?

38. He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

39. And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.

40. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.

41. And when he had taken the five loaves and

the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave *them* to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

42. And they did all eat, and were filled.

43. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

44. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

THE sight of much people is always striking and impressive. Let us notice that when Jesus saw the crowd which followed Him, He was moved with compassion. Every individual in that crowd was immortal, the most degraded form was intended by God to be a child of His, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. It is indeed well for the world that His compassions "fail not."¹

The disciples urged Jesus to send away the people that they might buy bread, this would have supplied their wants in a natural manner; but Jesus wished to give a fresh instance of His power, and also to leave on record another of those miracles, whose depth of meaning can only be spiritually discerned and

¹ Lam. iii. 22.

interpreted. He knew better than the disciples that the multitude was fainting for food—He, Who had fasted forty days and nights in the desert, and Who had refused to turn the stones into bread to satisfy His own hunger, He knew well what want meant. And He also foresaw the wants of the lonely human heart, which in every age finds the world “a desert place.” He wished to leave the comforting assurance that He is able in every circumstance, and in every place, to give us the miraculous food by the power of His Holy Spirit in the heart. “I am,” He says, “the Bread of life.” He offers this bread to all, without money and without price. Not one was overlooked among the five thousand—hunger and want were the only requisites on their part. The Spiritual food is likewise offered to all: “My Father giveth you the true bread from Heaven, for the bread of God is He which cometh down from Heaven and giveth life unto the world.”²

² John vi. 32, 33.

ST. MARK VI. 45-52.

45. And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

46. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

47. And when even was come the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

48. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

49. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

50. For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

51. And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.

52. For they considered not the *miracle* of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

How true is the image which represents life as a journey—a voyage across the restless waves of time, to the Heavenly shore beyond.

Perhaps our Lord, Who made use of every figure of speech, and every illustration, to make His disciples enter into the meaning of spiritual things, wished to teach them in a way they never could forget. His eyes were watching them long before they thought of Him—"He saw them toiling in rowing." The slow advance and the spent strength, the storm they were too feeble to withstand, all was known to Him. Jesus Himself was coming to them, though they knew it not. "It is I, be not afraid." Let us try to realize His Holy Presence more and more, and to remember that it is the Almighty Friend—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,"¹ who has said, "I will be with him in trouble."² How often in this life are the still waters exchanged for the sudden storm. We look around in vain for the cause of the change; we thought that we were steering straight on in the way of duty, when clouds and darkness obscure even our beacon lights. Then it is that we must remember that God's Presence is as near us in the loneliness of sorrow as in the brightness of joy,

¹ Heb. xiii. 8.² Ps. xci. 15.

nay, even nearer, for He is then watching "that the trial of our faith be found unto praise and honour and glory."³

We read that the disciples' hearts "were hardened," that they "considered not the miracle of the loaves." Have we no past mercies to consider? Have our wants never been supplied by an invisible Hand, when we were in distress, in some desert place friendless and helpless? Has no light sprung up, no deliverance come? We know that it has; each one of God's children has many such a past which He intends should serve as an assurance of the future, and be a comfort in the present hour of need. "Because thou *hast been* my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice."⁴

ST. MARK VI. 53-56.

53. And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.

54. And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him,

55. And ran through that whole region round

³ 1 Peter i. 7.

⁴ Ps. lxiii. 7.

about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

56. And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

VILLAGES, cities, or country, all have the same sad tale to tell; all human nature is alike subject to the mysterious law of pain and suffering.

No place, no state of life, exempts us; it is one of the universal lessons set to all. When we read verses such as these, we long to bring those whom we love and who suffer, to Christ's visible Presence; we almost repine that the instantaneous cures we read of in the Gospels are refused now. Why was it so, we ask, in those days? and why is it different now? Probably, out of pity to His suffering people in all ages, our Lord wished to leave on record many of these exhibitions of His tenderness and His power; to help their faith, to teach what He can and will do in the future, in the times of restitution of all things, when the devil's

kingdom, and all pain and sickness and infirmity, shall have come to a "perpetual end." We have the limitless promises, "Lo I am with you always." "If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Ours is the promise of Christ's abiding Presence in this world; and the precious hopes of the world to come are ours also. The oftener we think of our Saviour as a Friend, touched by the feeling of our infirmities, the more will His Presence become real to us, and in a little while, to those who love and trust Him here, shall the words be fulfilled, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes¹."

ST. MARK VII. 1-8.

Then came together unto him, the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

2. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.

3. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except

¹ Rev. xxi. 4.

they wash *their* hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

4. And *when they come* from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, *as* the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

5. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

6. He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me.

7. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.

8. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, *as* the washing of pots and cups : and many such like things ye do.

THE Pharisees came round our Lord to try to detect some error in His teaching. He unmasked their hypocrisy, and exposed them fearlessly before the people. The disciples must have been greatly astonished to hear their Master exchange the tones of pity and sympathy, with which He taught the ignorant and comforted the sick, for the

stern voice of reproof and censure. Hypocrisy is a sin which none but God dare to expose, for He alone knows the heart; but of all the condemnations in God's Word those against the hypocrite are the strongest. It is well for us to observe whatever outward forms the service of our Church sanctions, if we find that they help to fix our mind on the spiritual meaning. Jeremiah's prayer for himself and his people was, "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens¹." The great sin of the Pharisees was that they observed the outward service of God, in order to gain the respect of the people; St. John tells us "they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." But we must also beware of the reverse danger—of having the heart inclined to God and to holy things, and with the lips to deny God the honour which we are bound to give Him. Let our prayer be that the Holy Spirit may teach our lips to honour Him aright and our hearts to be fixed and grounded in His love.

¹ Lam. iii. 41.

ST. MARK VII. 9-13.

9. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandments of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

10. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother ; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death :

11. But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is* Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me ; *he shall be free.*

12. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother ;

13. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered : and many such like things do ye.

THE Jews from the early days of Moses dedicated their tithes, or the tenth part of all which they possessed, to God¹. From this custom, so excellent in its original integrity, sprang in time the corruption which our Lord here exposes. The honour due to parents was one of God's own commandments to the Jews. He even attached a special temporary blessing to its observance, and yet these very

¹ Deut. xii. 6.

Jews set God's commandment aside, neglected to give their parents the things which they required, and made it as an excuse that they were dedicated to God. But God cannot be deceived. He reads the heart. He never requires the letter of His law to be fulfilled, regardless of its spirit. He will accept the service we render Him, only if the motive be pure and honest. God will accept the unselfish sacrifice of time, or of pleasure, given up for the sake of others, as His "Corban," that is to say, as service done to Himself; and though for our own gratification it is often pleasanter, and far easier, to withdraw from home duties, or from the work of our special station in life,—fencing ourselves round with a barrier through which no temptations from the outer world can come—this is very rarely what God requires.

It is not so much the work we do for Him, as the spirit in which our daily duties are performed, that He will bless—the uncongenial duties cheerfully done because He has given them us to do—the daily self-denials practised for His sake; these and such as these, are the tithes which He will treasure

up for us in Heaven, and which, even in this world, He will repay with the blessing of "His peace which passeth all understanding."

ST. MARK VII. 14-23.

14. And when he had called all the people *unto him*, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one *of you*, and understand :

15. There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him : but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

16. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

17. And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

18. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also ? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, *it* cannot defile him ;

19. Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats ?

20. And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.

21. For from within, out of the heart of man,

proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, 'murders,

22. Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness :

23. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

ALL who love Nature must often have admired the reflections of the summer trees in some clear calm piece of water. Even the clouds, as they float silently by overhead, are faithfully mirrored upon the surface below ; but disturb that quiet surface and the charm is broken—all is formless and uneven, you can recognise no picture now, the loveliness is gone. So is it with the human heart. In quietness and confidence, in communion with God, the heavenly image will be reflected ; by studying his word and doing His will, the spirit of holiness will colour all our thoughts, and transform them into the Divine likeness ; but in the storm of passion, or beneath the chilling breath of selfishness, no trace can be seen of the pure and heavenly pattern. Perhaps there is no more usual form of evil thoughts than discontent ; it is so entirely a

part of our fallen nature to be dissatisfied with our lot in life, that the devil chooses this ground to build his favourite vices upon. Let the Christian beware of this sin, which spreads, like a plague spot, over the whole heart, poisoning every simple pleasure and healthy feeling. The task of ordering our thoughts as God would have us do is a very difficult one, but the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. To think much of God, and to pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit, is the best way of shutting out evil thoughts. The heart of God's people is to be His sanctuary. He has promised that "the pure in heart shall see God."

ST. MARK VII. 24-30.

24. And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know *it*: but he could not be hid.

25. For a *certain* woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:

26. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

27. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* unto the dogs.

28. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

29. And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

30. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

HUMILITY is, of all the Christian virtues, the one which our Lord extols the most, and repeatedly enforces upon His followers. It is too delicate and too lowly a plant to attract much notice; its growth is slow in the heart, and the soil needs constant watching. But to the eye of our Heavenly Father no grace is more precious, and none lifts us nearer to His presence. Even in the Bible characters we have very few examples of great humility. Pride seems to have been a characteristic of the disciples before the Holy Ghost descended upon them. Courage and devotion

we all admire, unselfishness wins every heart, but the world often misunderstands humility, and it is seldom rewarded on earth. But if we study our blessed Lord's life, we see how greatly He honoured this grace. From His birth unto His grave, His whole life was one of humility; and whenever we meekly bear a scornful taunt, whenever we take the lowest place, and are content to be thought little of by our companions, then are we following in our Master's steps. It may seem to us that we are only going down the steep and difficult valley of humiliation, but in reality it is the upward road to heaven. Only when we accept, as did this Syrophenician woman, the position which Christ gives us with an un murmuring "Yes, Lord," will the blessing come. Humility is from heaven; pride is of the devil. No rank, no station in life, guards us against the deceitfulness of pride, it is a secret sin rooted into our fallen nature, rich and poor, high or low, all have its seeds within. Only the grace of God can enable us to overcome it. "He that humbleth himself," saith Christ, "shall be exalted."

ST. MARK VII. 31-37.

31. And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coast of Decapolis.

32. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

33. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;

34. And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

35. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

36. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published *it*;

37. And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.

How wonderful it must have seemed to this poor man to have the power of speech and the enjoyment of hearing given back to him. Perhaps we wonder why Jesus, whose whole life was spent in doing good, sighed as He restored these precious gifts. May

He not have thought of their pure and perfect use as exercised in heaven—of the glory and delight which the angels feel in them—the songs of praise and heavenly anthems? And then did He not think of all the sad cries of earth?—the impatient words of complaint, the voice of passion and the clamour of dissension, the flattering and deceitful words—and the recollection of what human speech now is, instead of what it ought to be, might well make our Redeemer sigh.

Let David's prayer often rise from our hearts: "Let the words of my mouth be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord."¹ What a safeguard would such a prayer be, if we used it before joining our companions in the necessary business, or the pleasures of the day. Could our speech take some definite, permanent shape, and suddenly be made visible to our eyes, would it give us pain or pleasure to gaze upon? Each life is helping to add to the two great piles which silently and surely are rising up to be witnesses for us or against us at the last day. One, the devil's heap, black and shapeless, composed of foul thoughts,

¹ Ps. xix. 14.

sinful actions, and evil words; the other, beautiful with the glory of God, built up with good words and holy actions, a structure which He will bless and recognise as His temple. To which of these two buildings do we add day by day? Every unselfish action, every helpful word, is immortalized by Him Who has promised that the smallest thing done for His sake "shall in no wise lose its reward."

ST. MARK VIII. 1-9.

In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and saith unto them,

2. I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:

3. And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

4. And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these *men* with bread here in the wilderness?

5. And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.

6. And he commanded the people to sit down

on the ground : and he took the seven loaves and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before *them* ; and they did set *them* before the people.

7. And they had a few small fishes : and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before *them*.

8. So they did eat, and were filled : and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left, seven baskets.

9. And they that had eaten were about four thousand : and he sent them away.

THREE days of earnest following of Jesus, brought this miraculous supply. Let us remember this, and take courage when we feel that we have been following Jesus closely, and yet find all around but a wilderness. At the right moment, in God's own time, even our temporal needs will be satisfied by Him Who is a Father to His people. He can give bread in the wilderness ; and the loneliest and saddest of positions will end in full blessing, if only we keep close to Jesus. It is most interesting to notice how many spiritual blessings are promised under the figure of wilderness wanderings. The Christian's pilgrim life is compared repeatedly to the trackless path,

and the uncultivated country, but through the dreary journey we may hear the Saviour's tender words, "I have compassion." He Who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," knows all our wants, He will not let us faint by the way; only let us follow Him wherever He may lead—in the crowded city, in the suffering chamber, or in the lonely wilderness, each will have their own peculiar trials and difficulties—but if we faithfully keep close to Jesus, each shall yield a special blessing. The promise is sure; though it tarry we must wait for it, it will surely come¹. In our darkest hour of loneliness and hunger of the heart Jesus says, "I have compassion." How deep that compassion is, and what great things it works for us all, we shall only know when we read the story of our life reflected in the light of God. "What I do," said our Lord once to Peter, "thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter²."

¹ 1 Kings viii. 56.

² John xiii. 7.

ST. MARK VIII. 10-13.

10. And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

11. And the Pharisees came forth and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

12. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

13. And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

It was not because the Pharisees questioned our Lord that He left them, but because of the spirit in which they asked their questions. Jesus was always patient with ignorance, and even tolerant of prejudice, but the Pharisees were not honest in their search after truth. Hypocrites were the only class of enquirers which our Lord left unanswered.

Whatever doubts or difficulties we may have, let us take them boldly and honestly to Jesus, seeking for no sign, but not resting till the Holy Spirit Himself shews us the

truth. Jesus will never leave the poor in spirit and the humble-minded, but will bind them unto Himself with His easy yoke, and when He sends forth judgment unto victory they shall inherit the earth.

“Jesus left them.” How strangely sound these words! Jesus Who received sinners, Who was called the friend of publicans, left these proud Pharisees, and left them so sadly—“He sighed deeply in His spirit.” Well He knew that pride cherished in the heart raises an insurmountable barrier to pardon and peace.

But if pride is so terrible a sin, how can we drive it out? By our own power it is impossible, but if we really desire to be made humble, and ask the help of the Holy Spirit, our enemy shall be subdued. Many people love their pride, and do not wish to lose it; like the Pharisees, they are entirely blinded by it, and in such hearts the Lord Jesus will not dwell. Let us each guard against this great and fatal evil, which is as deceitful as it is unchristian. The devil knows its power well, and he adapts it to every position of life. David’s prayer “Shew

me Thy ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths," was immediately answered by the voice of the Holy Spirit: "The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way¹."

ST. MARK VIII. 14-21.

14. Now *the disciples* had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

15. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and *of* the leaven of Herod.

16. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is* because we have no bread.

17. And when Jesus knew *it*, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?

18. Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?

19. When I brake the five loaves among five thousand how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.

20. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.

¹ Ps. xxv. 4, 9.

21. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

WE sometimes say, in speaking of the conduct of our friend, "I know that he will do such and such a thing." We have watched him in times past, through many a trying circumstance, and we have ever found him kind and true, and although these new events may perhaps have come upon him quite unexpectedly, still we think that we can safely answer for his conduct.

How bitter a thing it is to find ourselves mistaken, to know that some influence, unsuspected by us, has worked upon our friend, and drawn him aside from the right path; that we can trust no longer to his principles, as we did before. "I am the Lord, I change not¹," says God. "Do ye not remember?" God's dealings with His people in the past, are a sure pledge of the future. Not only the supply, but the fragments we have had over and above what we desired, should remind us of His love and His wisdom. It is far safer and happier thus quietly to leave our future to God's care than to in-

¹ Mal. iii. 6.

dulge in the delusive visions which our wishes conjure up, colouring the unknown path with the false hues of our own fancy. Let the confession "He hath done all things well," link itself to the assurance divinely given, that "All things shall work together for good to them that love God."²

ST. MARK VIII. 22-26.

22. And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

23. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

24. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

25. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

26. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell *it* to any in the town.

THIS was a very gradual miracle, and like all our Lord's miracles has much teaching

² Rom. viii. 28.

connected with it. We do not know what had taken place in Bethsaida before the blind man was brought to Jesus, but we read in St. Matthew's Gospel, that our Lord, in denouncing the judgments which should fall on Bethsaida, said that the mighty works done there would add tenfold to its condemnation¹.

Probably these mighty works had been done before this miracle, and on repentance had followed; and therefore it was that our Lord led the blind man out of Bethsaida, and forbade his returning there again; charging him expressly, not even "to tell it to any in the town."

The inhabitants of Bethsaida had had their day, and now the grace they scorned was to be withdrawn from them. We must also believe that it was for the sake of this man's soul that he was forbidden to return to the town. We shall ever find it our safest plan to avoid temptation and godless companions. Do we know that such a place is an irreligious home? or that those companions whom we find so pleasant, are not serving God, or

¹ Matt. xi. 21.

caring for Him? Let no inducement make us dwell there, if it is not our duty to do so, nor let us seek the friendship of those who forget God. This blind man had a home of his own, and there his first duty lay, not in the wicked godless town. "Jesus sent him away to his house." To those who are placed by God's providence in positions of danger and among bad companions, God will give, if they ask Him, His own especial grace, and will keep them from falling; but we have no right to expect His special guardianship if self-interest or worldly advancement guide the choice.

Let our prayer ever be that God will direct all our steps in life, and choose our lot for us.—"The Lord knoweth the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be for ever ²."

ST. MARK VIII. 27-33.

27. And Jesus went out, and his disciples into the towns of Cæsarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

² Ps. xxxvii. 18.

28. And they answered, John the Baptist: but some *say*, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

29. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

30. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

31. And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

33. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

THE words which Peter spake to our Lord in answer to the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" are among the first recorded words of any of the disciples which shew that they understood the divinity of their Master. The confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ," must have been indeed welcome to Jesus, who had borne so long and so patiently with their hardness of heart. What

comfort would it be to Him, "Who was in all points like as we are" to feel, that now, at least, one of His little band of followers knew who he was, and what His mission really meant! To Peter would He henceforth look for sympathy and support in His hours of weariness and disappointment. And our Lord did begin from this time to talk more about Himself than He had hitherto done; more about His coming sufferings and His rejection by the Jews. The dark future, into which He was gradually passing, began now to be revealed to His disciples. But we soon see how much Peter had got to learn, and that even our Lord had to go through the experience so familiar to us all, of the insufficiency of human sympathy. "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

We are seldom placed so much alone as was our Lord as regards human sympathy, but our best motives are often misunderstood by others. God sends us these disappointments to throw us more entirely upon His sympathy, to teach us to lean only upon Him, and in those special times when we go forth to meet our trials—when we are

consciously entering upon "the dark and cloudy day," let us remember that One is there before us, Who knows all our sorrows. It is in the shadow of the Lord's Hand that the polished shaft is made, hidden in His quiver. When, and only when, this painful work is accomplished, will the message go forth: "Thou art My servant in whom I will be glorified¹."

ST. MARK VIII. 34-38.

34. And when he had called the people *unto him* with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

36. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37. Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

38. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

¹ Isa. xlix. 2, 3.

THREE things are mentioned here by our Lord as necessary for His people—self-denial, submission to God's will, and following Christ.

' Each heart knows what its special cross is; none can answer for another. It is often a hidden cross, unknown sometimes even to our dearest friend, but shaped by God's Hand and laid across our path by Him. It has been well said—"Dragged crosses are very heavy, carried crosses are very light." Perhaps among the many and various inscriptions on our separate crosses, the word "Disappointment" is oftenest to be found.

Let us pause to think how personally our Lord speaks; we are not called to follow an idea or an abstract principle, but a living Person—"Follow Me." How much easier would it make our submission and our self-denial, if we could always remember that it is "Jesus Himself" we are following, when we deny ourselves and take up our cross. This is a thought which our Lord constantly put before His disciples. "Do this in remembrance of Me"—"The cup of cold water given for My sake"—"Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake," and such like

passages of Scripture, could we but think of them in the hour of trial, would transform our suffering into high privilege. "Rejoice," says St. Peter, "inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy¹." Observe also how universal are the conditions of the Christian life—"Whosoever will come after me:" there is no distinction, no particular cross mentioned, just "his cross," which each must stoop low to carry. So shall we walk in His steps and be constantly "offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

ST. MARK IX. 1-8.

And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

2. And after six days Jesus taketh *with him* Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.

¹ Peter iv. 13.

3. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

4. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.

5. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

6. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.

7. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

8. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

THE question of recognition in the spiritual world after death is one which has often troubled the Christian mourner. But after studying this wonderful passage, which gives us so clear a glimpse into the unseen, can we doubt that our friends will remain as personal, and as individual, as did Moses and Elias? Peter seems to have recognised them instantly, probably from their traditionary characteristics. They were talking with Jesus, St. Luke tells us, about His death. Elijah,

who had never felt death, but who had ascended up into heaven with the chariot of fire¹, and Moses whose spirit had been called away by the great Creator upon the lonely mountain of Moab², and whose body was laid by God's own Hand in the secret place He chose. How different was their Redeemer's end to be—killed by the cruel hands of His enemies, forsaken by all his friends, and left to die upon a cross. In their earthly mission both Moses and Elias had broken down. "I am not able," Moses had said to God, "to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. Kill me, I pray thee, and let me not see my wretchedness³." God then helped, and gave him even more of His presence. Elijah had bitterly complained at Beersheba that he alone was left of all God's people⁴, and requested that he might die; and God sent him an angel with food to strengthen him, and gave Elisha to be his helper in his loneliness. But our Saviour was to tread "the winepress alone; of the people there was to be none with Him⁵." He

¹ 2 Kings. ii. 11. ² Deut. xxxiv. 6. ³ Num. xi. 15.

⁴ 1 Kings xix.

⁵ Isa. lxiii. 3.

was to endure the extremity of the curse upon sin; He, the sinless One, that we might be saved.

ST. MARK IX. 9-13.

9. And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

10. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

11. And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?

12. And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought.

13. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

HAD the disciples prayed to God to shew them what the rising from the dead meant, or had they reverently asked their Master to teach them, instead of questioning one with another, they would never have been so unbelieving and so hard of heart when Jesus

was crucified. The deep things of God can only be shewn by His Holy Spirit: no human answers will satisfy us; the ray of light must be reflected from the true Light, which is promised to him that followeth Christ. There are also many questions relating to the spiritual world, which God reserves to answer, for the time when the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed, when the Child of God shall bear the image of the heavenly.

Our spiritual discernment is limited now to the needs of our salvation. Hereafter we are expressly told that the glory shall be revealed and we shall be like Christ. Our Lord referred His disciples to the "written word"; had they studied that word more they would have known more.

The Word of God has been well compared to a mine wherein lies treasure untold, but its riches are only yielded to the patient explorer. We are so apt to make excuses for ourselves about this studying of God's Word; we say that we have no learning, no time, and few means of help. But do we conscientiously use the means we have? Do

we give up any time at all, worthy the name, to searching its pages? The Bible is generally its own interpreter, and if the trial were made of studying daily some passage, however short, with the marginal references, or with a Concordance, the interest awakened would amply repay us, and so would God's Word become a "lamp unto our path," to guide us in every difficulty, and comfort us in every trouble.

ST. MARK IX. 14-27.

14. And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

15. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to *him* saluted him.

16. And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?

17. And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

18. And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

19. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

20. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

21. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

22. And oft times it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.

23. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things *are* possible to him that believeth.

24. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

25. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, *Thou* dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

26. And *the spirit* cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; inso-much that many said, He is dead.

27. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.

HERE we see another sufferer brought to Jesus, one who was afflicted with a dumb and deaf spirit. What that exactly means we

cannot tell, but we clearly see that all good and peace and pleasure were shut out from that life, and passion and pain ruled unchecked. A dumb spirit, incapable of prayer or of any self-help, the spirit created to hold communion with its Maker, deaf and dumb? Yet such are we by nature, "deaf" to the voice of a Saviour, deaf even to the voice of conscience when scared by sin; deaf to every sound of heavenly invitation and glory! "Dumb" as to prayer, praise, confession of sin, or speaking of Him to others. Well was it for this poor suffering child that his father brought him at last direct to Jesus. "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Our Lord made it at once a personal matter, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth"—admitting the difficulty which the child's father felt to be so great, but shewing him that it lay, not in the Saviour's want of will or power, but in the heart of the father. Then came the confession, publicly made before all the people, Lord, I believe," and the prayer, "Help Thou mine unbelief." The result which fol-

lowed was the perfect cure of the child. Jesus had helped his unbelief mightily, and He will in like manner help us, if we bring our doubts and failures honestly to Him. "All things are possible to him that believeth"—no human being would dare to make such a promise: it is boundless and unfathomable, like eternity itself.

In this life the less we expect from others the fewer disappointments we shall generally have, but in spiritual things the reverse is the case. "Open thy mouth wide," says God, "and I will fill it."¹ "For of God and through Him and to Him are all things."

St. MARK IX. 28-32.

28. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?

29. And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting

30. And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know *it*.

¹ Ps. lxxxi. 10.

31. For he taught the disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him ; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

32. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

THE disciples had not yet learnt the power of prayer, nor could they, as Jewish followers of the law of Moses, have applied fasting to spiritual growth. Our Lord's own life was one long course of self-denial. He who was the possessor of all things, led voluntarily a life of hardship and poverty.

Lest the exhibitions of power which the disciples had seen, should mislead them, as to our Lord's success on earth, He began from this time to tell them more clearly of His approaching sufferings and humiliating death. When the king of Israel was given his choice by God, through the Prophet Gad, which of the three punishments he would bear, he prayed that he might "fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great, and not into the hand of man."¹

Jesus Christ knew better than David what was in the human heart, He knew that it

¹ 1 Chron. xxi. 13.

was "desperately wicked," and yet He chose for our sakes "to be delivered into the hands of men." He might have given up His life for us by any of God's dispensations; He might have "fallen asleep" as so many of His own people have done, from all ages: but He chose to pass through the darkest passage which ever lay on this side of the grave. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things²."

ST. MARK IX. 33-37.

33. And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it ye disputed among yourselves by the way?

34. But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who *should be* the greatest.

35. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, *the same* shall be last of all, and servant of all.

36. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,

37. Whosoever shall receive one of such children

² Rom. viii. 32.

in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

IF we want to measure our growth in grace, let us look narrowly at our humility. Is that a virtue which is growing in our hearts? Humility and the forgiveness of injuries were the two graces which our Lord constantly impressed upon His hearers, for well He knew how foreign both are to the natural heart. Morality and philosophy teach many excellent qualities, and did so, even in heathen times; but it is to Christianity alone that we owe the high value set on a meek and lowly spirit. They were but poor fishermen gathered round Jesus of Nazareth, and yet they disputed which of them should be the greatest. And so it has ever been, and ever will be; in all ranks, in every society where Christ's words do not rule the heart, pride and selfishness will make divisions and strife even among brethren. It is perhaps a harder thing to be really humble at heart, than anything else in our Christian course; and just because our Lord knew how utterly contrary true humbleness of mind was to the natural heart, He laid such stress on this

virtue, and in His own life and character so eminently displayed it. Born in a manger, subject to the rules of a very lowly home, for thirty years He submitted to the common events of a working man's lot, and when His public ministry began, He chose not the great, nor the able, for his personal friends, but simple ignorant men. He washed their feet, He was among them as one that serveth, and finally, at His death, He submitted silently and patiently to every sort of indignity.

All virtues are divine, but humility has been raised by our Lord to the very steps of heaven.

ST. MARK IX. 38-42.

38. And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us.

39. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.

40. For he that is not against us is on our part.

41. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

42. And whosoever shall offend one of *these* little

ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

OUR Lord in this passage strongly condemns the narrow spirit which measures all work by its own standard. Strictness for ourselves, and forbearance for others, should be our rule of judgment. It is a very natural feeling that we like to do our work for some one who appreciates our efforts, and who can sympathise in our difficulties. Few can work as thoroughly for an abstract idea as for a person.

Our Lord knew and recognised this. He raises the motive for working up to Himself, as to a living sympathising Person, who accepts even the smallest token, and takes account of the cup of cold water, if given for His sake. Surely with these words in our Bibles none need complain that they have nothing to give to Christ. How many free gifts does our heavenly Father bestow upon us in the course of a single day! Is there nothing that we can pass on to others for His sake? Let us ask ourselves at the close of each day, What have we done for Christ's sake?

How careful would we be of our conduct

if we always remembered that the "little ones" are under the Lord's especial care; not only the little children, but all the feeble and the helpless and the ignorant in the great journey of life. "The little ones," in spiritual attainments, those who have either not been blessed with our advantages or who have not used them well, how reverently should we treat them. What says the great Apostle Paul? "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."¹

ST. MARK IX. 43-48.

43. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

44. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

45. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

¹ Gal. vi. 1.

46. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

47. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

48. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

“ENTERING into life,” “entering into the kingdom of God” refers not only to the future state after death, but also to the state of peace and safety which they now enjoy who are the children of God through Christ.

In our daily life a choice must often be made between the things of God and the things of the world. Sin is nearly always attractive at first; but do we know the thing to be wrong that we wish to do, then, however dear to us, however seemingly necessary, we must give it up; whatever loss we may feel now from acting thus, the gain will be infinite, even in this world. David speaks, in the thirty-first Psalm, of the greatness of God’s goodness, which He lays up for them that trust Him, not only in the far-off future, but now, “before the sons of men.” Does

not our own experience prove this? If we look around and compare the life of a true Christian with that of a godless man, which is the happier?

Is that man or woman happy who cherishes some forbidden thing, who indulges wilfully in any sin which excludes them now from the kingdom of God?

Our Lord does not speak in these verses of the state of the heart, but gives clear and plain advice against definite sins and that subtle form of temptation which assails us often through legitimate means. It is no easy thing to break from the loved companion who we feel causes us to offend, or to give up the worldly advantage that we know is injuring our spiritual growth, or to snap the chains of evil habits: but we cannot—our Lord speaks most distinctly on this point—we cannot enter “life” unless we do so. “He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”¹

¹ Gal. vi. 8

ST. MARK IX. 49-50.

49. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

50. Salt *is* good : but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

SALT is an essential ingredient of daily food. Here our Lord employs it as an emblem of the divine grace, which can alone purify our hearts and preserve our actions from corruption. "Every one shall be salted with fire"—this plainly alludes to the method God pursues with His people. "The fire," says St. Paul, "shall try every man's work of what sort it is." God intends all the events and circumstances of our daily life to be tests to try our principles and faith ; nor need trials, according to the Bible meaning, be necessarily painful. God gives us, perhaps quite unexpectedly, the success which we have long wanted to attain, or He grants us some cherished desire of our hearts ; let us remember that these different circumstances are to try or test our character and principles, whether the work will abide which we have built on the

foundation of our faith. In the fifth chapter of St. Matthew our Lord calls His disciples the "salt of the earth." Has our influence with the companions of our daily life been wholesome and pure? We may be "unlearned and ignorant," as were Peter and John, but if we have the Spirit of Christ in our hearts as they had, those who watch our conduct will soon "take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus¹." God will give us more and more abundantly of His grace if we ask Him. We are encouraged to come boldly unto the throne of grace not only "that we may obtain mercy, but that we may find grace to help in time of need."²

ST. MARK X. 1-12.

1. And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judæa by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.

2. And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife? tempting him.

¹ Acts iv. 13.

² Heb. iv. 16.

3. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

4. And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put *her* away.

5. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

6. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

7. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

8. And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

9. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.

10. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same *matter*.

11. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

12. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

THE Pharisees asked Jesus, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?" St. Mark adds, they did this "tempting him." Our Lord answered their question clearly and decisively, referring them to a higher authority than Moses, even to God Himself. Many of

the Jewish laws given in the Wilderness were adapted to the peculiar state of the people, at that time, and were done away with under the Gospel dispensation ; but the rules referring to marriage, laid down by Jesus Christ, are even stricter and narrower than the law of Moses. Family life will have its trials, as well as other states of life ; we must not try to escape these trials, but learn to submit to them. "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder." He is "the God of all the families of Israel¹," if we wish for true happiness in our homes, we must place Him first and recognise His laws as they are laid down in the Bible, not evading them, or making a code to suit ourselves, because we think our circumstances are peculiar and different from others. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." If the duties of our family relationships were more honestly faced, and not left to the selection of fancy or inclination, how much less dissension would there be. God always links a duty to every pleasure, and this is true with regard to the exercise

¹ Jer. xxxi. 1.

of our natural affections. If we love the members of our own family without admitting this, our love will be selfish and changeful, varying with our own inclination, and capricious.

If, on the other hand, we recognise it as God's unalterable law, the duty will discipline the love, and the love will lighten the duty.

ST. MARK X. 13-16.

13. And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and *his* disciples rebuked those that brought *them*.

14. But when Jesus saw *it*, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

15. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

16. And he took them up in his arms, put *his* hands upon them, and blessed them.

WHEN we think of the kind and tender acts of our Saviour and of His many invitations of mercy, let us remember what He

said Himself about His mission in the world. "I have not spoken," He told His disciples, in the twelfth chapter of St. John, "of Myself, but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak, and I know that His commandment is life everlasting; whatsoever therefore the Father said unto Me so I speak." Jesus Christ came down from heaven to do the will of the Father, and in every loving compassionate deed, and tender word, we see the reflection of God Almighty. It is God Who opens the kingdom of heaven through Jesus Christ to the child-like and believing.

Jesus tells us very plainly, that unless we will accept the salvation offered us, in this humble unquestioning spirit, we cannot enter the kingdom of God. We dare not reason about the conditions; God's thoughts are not like our thoughts, nor are His ways like ours. His mind is creative, ours at best can only apprehend what is told or shewn to us, therefore we can never measure His will, but must submit to His plan of salvation in simple child-like faith. The wisdom

of God's moral laws, and the speedy punishment which follows in this life on disobeying them, we can all appreciate ; but the spiritual laws of God's kingdom stand by themselves. We cannot know why He has framed them as they are, His reasons are among the hidden things which He has not revealed. We must enter this spiritual kingdom—if we are to enter it at all—as little children, accepting even the Faith which admits¹ us as God's free gift. These are the conditions which the proud human heart finds so difficult to receive, but God has made them universal and unchanging, the greatest sinner and the greatest saint can only be saved by the blood of Christ.

The redeemed who shall stand before God's throne will all join in one song of praise, and though palms of victory will be in their hands and their robes be bright with the glory of heaven, they shall, with a loud voice, ascribe "Salvation to our God which sitteth on the Throne and to the Lamb²."

¹ Eph. ii. 8.

² Rev. vii. 9, 10.

ST. MARK X. 17-22.

17. And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

18. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is* none good but one, that is, God.

19. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

20. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

21. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up thy cross, and follow me.

22. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

THE question—What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? has been asked repeatedly through all ages, and the answer must always be the same. The heart and the will must be given up to God.

The invitation is ever sounding, "Come, take up the cross, and follow Me." Each

heart knows what its own peculiar cross is, and the Lord knows it also. Jesus pointed this young man to his equivalent in heaven—"Thou shalt have treasure." What he gave up on earth should be stored above, treasure should await him there—"good things" which pass man's understanding, and the word of Him Who is "The Truth," for the security. The wealth which this young man was called upon to give up was in itself no wrong, the wrong was in his giving up his heart to it. It caused him to offend, it was to him what our Lord in the foregoing conversation had warned His followers against—the hand or foot or eye becoming a source of temptation. We daily pray against temptation; do we never mock our own prayers by wilfully setting up idols for ourselves? Things which are in themselves perfectly harmless, nay, even intended by God to be blessings, may, from the place we let them occupy in our hearts, become snares to us, which will cause our fall. Our possessions, whether great or small, are God's loans, and we but the stewards, whose accounts He will reckon up Himself. Have we been faithful?

ST. MARK X. 23-31.

23. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God !

24. And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and said unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God !

25. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

27. And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men *it is* impossible, but not with God : for with God all things are possible.

28. Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

29. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's,

30. But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

31. But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last first.

THE remark of St. Peter strikes us as a strange and vainglorious one. Yet our Lord does not rebuke him, He only gives the warning, "Many that are first shall be last." Peter was not yet as a little child, he had not yet fully learned the lesson of humility. It is very interesting, in studying his Epistles, to mark how the proud and boastful spirit was softened, and how deeply he became imbued with the spirit of his Master. But it was only when he had grown old in the service of Christ, when he had repeatedly offered to give up his very life for Him, that the early impetuosity and vigour were all turned into a desire for God's glory. He seems, after the day of Pentecost, to have changed his very mode of thought by constantly dwelling on the example of Christ, and "the glory that should follow."

We must also note the encouragements which our Lord holds out to all who give up worldly advantages for His sake. We are apt to overlook this, but we need never be afraid of limiting the promises of Christ; and the thought of His words would often help us to choose rightly when perplexing circum-

stances arise about our career in life. Can we expect the great blessings Jesus speaks of, and in the end eternal life, if we wilfully follow some occupation which dishonours him? The daily life and the choice of each, be he fisherman or rich proprietor, is under the eye of God's loving watchfulness. Let us then ever pray earnestly for the spirit of wisdom and true understanding which God alone can give, and which shall guide us aright in every path of life.

ST. MARK X. 32-45.

32. And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

33. *Saying*, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:

34. And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.

35. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee,

came unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

36. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

37. They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

38. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

39. And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized;

40. But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared.

41. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

42. But Jesus called them *to him*, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and the great ones exercise authority upon them.

43. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

44. And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

45. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

THE words of Jesus, "Come, take up the cross, and follow Me," were still sounding in the ears of the disciples when our Lord told them, more explicitly than He had yet done, what trials lay before Him. He was to be the first of the little band to enter on the path of scorn and humiliation. Each of His followers was afterwards to tread it for himself, but the personal application was to come to them gradually and by degrees. Now they were only taught to think of their Leader and to look upon Him, as He consciously approached nearer and nearer to His great sacrifice, and to study His preparation for the terrible ordeal.

What a jarring interruption to the chain of Christ's thoughts must this strange question of James and John have been, and yet how gently He rebukes them. Their demand was evidently prompted more by ignorance than by ambition, and our Lord always treated ignorance gently and patiently. His conversations with Nicodemus, with the Samaritan woman

at Jacob's Well, with the blind man cast out of the Temple, and with many others, show us this.

Jesus speaks here of the cup of humiliation and of service as one which He habitually drank of. The words refer to His daily life on earth. "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?" The prayer of these two disciples, which they asked so ignorantly, was partly granted them in this life, but in a very different manner from what they expected. James was soon put to death by the sword of Herod, and St. John learnt to run with patience the long race that was set before him. "I go," our Lord said to the eleven later on, "to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself."

ST. MARK X. 46-52.

46. And they came to Jericho : and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimæus, the son of Timæus, sat by the highway side begging.

47. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, *thou* son of David, have mercy on me.

48. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, *Thou son of David, have mercy on me.*

49. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.

50. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

51. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should unto thee? The blind man said, unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

52. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

IN these verses we read the story of the blind beggar, who sat in utter helplessness by the highway side. Incapable of making any effort to ameliorate his condition, he sat there, an object of pity to some, of indifference to most. He heard the busy throng pass and repass him; no link of fellowship, no communion of interest lay between him and them. All was darkness within and without. Does not his state correspond with those times,¹ which come in the lives of all, when we sit,

¹ Isa. l. 10.

as it were, by the highway side of life, listening to the busy stir around—feeling that we cannot join the active crowd, that we are alone. “Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee.” Let us but place ourselves, however dispirited and worn-out we may be with the struggle of life, where Jesus will pass; let us but call upon Him—as we are, and where we are—He will give us light. And well is it for ourselves if we can tell others of the call of Christ.

Bartimæus seems not to have heard the answering “Come,” though his cry had reached the Saviour’s ears, until the crowd around him said, “He calleth thee.” Cannot we take up the message and pass it on? Do we know of none who are groping their way and cannot hear the Saviour’s call, deafened by the crowd around, or by the many cares of life? Let us say to such: “Rise; he calleth thee.”

ST. MARK XI. 1-6.

1. And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,

2. And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring *him*.

3. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.

4. And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.

5. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?

6. And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.

OUR Lord was now rapidly approaching the terrible end before Him. He had travelled, doubtless on foot, the twenty or thirty miles which lay between Jericho and Bethany. Jericho, which had been the dwelling-place of Elisha in olden time, and where Zacchæus, the "man that was a sinner," had been honoured by the presence of Christ in his house. The mount of Olives was now reached by Jesus and His disciples; perhaps our Lord was resting under the cool shade of some of those gray olive trees, which are said by travellers still to cover the mountain side.

Almost every action of our Lord, in these last days, was conformed to the will of God as revealed by the prophets. Zechariah had foretold the exact manner of His entry into Jerusalem, and Jesus fulfilled it to the letter. "Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass."

The difficulties which the disciples must have foreseen in executing their Master's command vanished when they repeated faithfully the message He gave them. It is generally so when we do the definite work which our conscience tells us that Jesus has given us to do—"The Lord hath need of him," will far oftener silence opposition than we should anticipate, if we only consulted our own doubting hearts. If we feel sure that we are about our Father's business we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me."¹

ST. MARK XI. 7-11.

7. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.

¹ Heb. xiii. 6.

8. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed *them* in the way.

9. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

10. Blessed *be* the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

11. And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

THE enthusiasm of the multitude in seeing our Lord ride into Jerusalem was a literal comment on His own description of those hearers who receive the word with gladness, but have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time. Where were all those men who shouted Hosannas to welcome Jesus Christ, where were they when this same Jesus was dying on the cross? Let us be very watchful over ourselves that excitement does not mislead us. When the heart is touched by any passing good influence or stirring event, it is natural and right that all our best feelings should rise up in sympathy

with what is noble. But the root of excellence must be planted far down in principle, it must be nourished by the quiet dew of God's Holy Spirit, and submit to the labour of the great Husbandman, Who will dig about it and prune it as He sees best, that the fruit may ripen slowly but surely for His glory.

St. Matthew gives a detailed account of our Lord's visit to the temple, St. Mark only says, "He looked round about upon all things." Few, but solemn words! Would that we might remember them as we sit in the Lord's House, or meet together for prayer; would that we might remember them when going about our daily work, and in times of social recreation, at our duties or at our pleasures—"The Lord looks round about upon all things." The worldliness and the levity which Jesus saw carried on in His Father's house at Jerusalem made the temple a place of grief and pain to Him, while the lowly home at Bethany, where Mary and Martha lived, was congenial to His feelings, because love was in that home.

ST. MARK XI. 12-14.

12. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

13. And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not *yet*.

14. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard *it*.

OUR Lord chose this fig-tree to inculcate a deep religious truth. Fruit of the tree, or of the plant, was one of His favourite emblems for the good works of righteousness. It is a lesson so self-evident, and so easy to read, and to remember, that Jesus applied this teaching constantly—the growing corn, the mustard tree, the fig-tree, and the vine—all were chosen by Him in turn to shew how all-important the fruit-bearing is. In this instance we are expressly told that the time of figs, that is to say, of ripe figs, was not yet; but the fig-tree formed its fruit, which was very slow in ripening, long before the leaves appeared, and we read “He found nothing but leaves.” Undoubtedly our Lord’s curse, or condemna-

tion, was intended to serve as a warning to the disciples, and to us who come after, and to shew us that life is to be spent in efforts after what is real and profitable.

Now was the time when the disciples were taking in nourishment from their Lord, now was their training time—would they, or would they not, bear fruit unto everlasting life? To the crowd around, Judas and Peter appeared equally devoted to their Master, but fruit for evil or for good was forming in the heart of each.

Let us look well into our own hearts as we ask ourselves—What sort of fruit are we bearing? St. Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit—that strange mysterious power, which like the motive power of many earthly things, works quietly and silently, changing the very thoughts and intents of the heart. The list is as fresh and lovely as of old—Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.¹

¹ Gal. v. 22, 23.

ST. MARK XI. 15-19.

15. And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves ;

16. And would not suffer that any man should carry *any* vessel through the temple.

17. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

18. And the scribes and chief priests heard *it*, and sought how they might destroy him : for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

19. And when even was come, he went out of the city.

THE Temple, as it stood in the days of our Saviour, was enclosed by a large outer wall, in many respects it was very different from the first temple which Solomon had built. Solomon had prayed that it should be a place where the supplication of Israel should go up to Heaven.¹ Now it was a resort for

¹ 2 Chron. vi.

the self-righteous Pharisees, the proud Scribes, the godless multitude, and the busy bargaining crowd. How sadly must it have struck the Lord Jesus Christ that even here, in God's own House, no love or respect was shewn to His Father. Even the chief priests sought how they might destroy Jesus for restoring order. It is a good test to put to ourselves about our church, whether we can call it a house of Prayer? Do we go there to meet with God? Do we confess our sins to Him there, and seek for pardon and peace? Do we enter its walls with our hearts and minds cleansed from the defiling thoughts and wishes of the world? or do we go only because others go; because it is thought respectable to go?

There is no charm or magic power in any place or building, which can guard our souls from temptation. It was on a pinnacle, or outer wall, of the great temple itself, that Satan tempted our Lord at the beginning of His public earthly ministry, and neither time nor place will shield us from his devices. We must have the whole armour of righteousness ever ready, on the right hand and on the

left, and with the shield of faith alone we shall be able to quench all his "fiery darts."

ST. MARK XI. 20-26.

20. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

21. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

22. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

23. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass? he shall have whatsoever he saith.

24. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.

25. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

AFTER spending the night again in Bethany, our Lord passed the same road with His

disciples as on the previous day. He was now giving them many special and precious lessons. By the evident parable of the withered fig tree, He shewed them how by faith and prayer they could grasp the promise He had given so short a time before—that with God all things are possible.

We know that they learnt by degrees to call upon this miraculous power, and were never disappointed. In its early days the Christian Church needed strong pillars and deep foundations; the world was against it, and but for visible help from God, its first preachers would have been easily crushed, for the doctrines they inculcated were opposed to all Jewish and heathen tradition. “An eye for an eye” was no longer to be the rule of life, but “Forgive, if ye have ought against any.” Pride was to give way to humility, ruling to service. Hard doctrines these for Galilean fishermen to preach before kings and rulers. But one by one the mountains of difficulty were removed. Faith and prayer were all-powerful then, and are so still. God no longer chooses to shew us His miraculous interposition, but He still works, by His

Holy Spirit, miracles in the spiritual kingdom, as great as Peter and John ever worked in the material world. And this power shall never cease till time itself has passed away; rather does it appear to glow with brighter light in these latter days, and to be more abundantly given. Faith and prayer can still transform the hardest heart into a temple of the Holy Spirit, and can make the dullest and saddest lot on earth a passage to glory.

ST. MARK XI. 27-33.

27. And they come again to Jerusalem : and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,

28. And say unto him. By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?

29. And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

30. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.

31. And they reasoned with themselves, saying,

If we shall say, From heaven ; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him ?

32. But if we shall say, Of men ; they feared the people : for all *men* counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.

33. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

“THE baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men ? Answer me.” The way in which Jesus asks this question strikes us as different from His usual manner. There is something abrupt, almost sharp, in it. Christ’s words were not as ours ; even when tried by the contradiction of sinners against Himself they were always patient and eminently helpful. Why then, on this occasion, did He refuse to answer the question asked Him, until His enemies had first replied to Him ? The reason is not far to seek. He knew that their question was prompted by no honest desire after truth. The baptism of John was admitted by the Scribes and Chief Priests in their secret hearts to be from heaven, and John had plainly pointed to the Lamb of

God, but now when the truth was pressed upon them, they gave the answer which so many give—"We cannot tell." To confess the truth would have been to confess that they were sinners in presence of a Saviour, and this they would not do. This was why the Lord Jesus gave them this sad refusal—"Neither do I tell you." He Who taught the multitudes all things, Who never turned away from the ignorant and the lost, refused to reveal His authority to these proud self-willed Scribes. Does it not recall to our minds the scene enacted hundreds of years before on the slopes of Mount Carmel, when Elijah challenged the people, and they answered him not a word¹? God will never force His truth upon us, but He will reveal it to those who "follow on to know the Lord." What we know to be true we must act up to, not colouring it to suit our evasions of duty, but coming humbly in prayer to Christ to be taught of Him. So shall we learn "the secret of the Lord."

¹ 1 Kings xviii.

ST. MARK XII. 1-12.

1. And he began to speak unto them by parables. A *certain* man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about *it*, and digged *a place for* the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went unto a far country.

2. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.

3. And they caught *him*, and beat him, and sent *him* away empty.

4. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded *him* in the head, and sent *him* away shamefully handled.

5. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.

6. Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

7. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be our's.

8. And they took him, and killed *him*, and cast *him* out of the vineyard.

9. What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

10. And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:

11. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

12. And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

THIS parable was a familiar one to the Jews. Isaiah had spoken very similarly long ago to "the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah¹." They had had warning upon warning, and yet they would not repent. Now the Lord of the Vineyard had sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to them, and their conscience told them that this parable was spoken against them, and then we read "they left Jesus and went their way." How is it with us when God sends us messages and warnings, do we also try to escape from them and go on our way? Does not our conscience often explain some circumstances in our lives, which God intends us "to lay to heart?" It is true that

¹ Isa. vi. 1-7.

we can now often escape from our own thoughts, but never can we escape from the responsibility of deliberately putting them away from us. Sooner or later we shall meet them again. "Son, remember," will sound on the other side of the gulf, great and wide though it be.

Each one of us has been planted in God's Vineyard, we have Christian influences all around us—an open Bible, and a throne of grace to which we may continually resort. Have we used these blessings as we shall wish that we had done, when our dying hour arrives, when everything of this life must be left behind for ever, and we are going, alone, into the unknown land, to answer for the deeds done in the body? "Behold now is the accepted time—now is the day of salvation." "Call upon Me," says God, "in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee²."

ST. MARK XII. 13-17.

13. And they sent unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in *his* words.

² Ps. l. 15.

14. And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?

15. Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see *it*.

16. And they brought *it*. And he saith unto them, Whose *is* this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cæsar's.

17. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

THE Pharisees and the Herodians have long passed away as a sect, but the captious cavilling spirit of these men has survived, and will last till the end of time. Our Lord's comment on their question was: "Why do ye tempt me?" reminding us of His words to Satan—"It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." But as Jesus knew and foresaw all things He answered their question in a way which should guide us in all difficulties which may arise from the conflict between legitimate

things of the world, and spiritual things. We see that our Lord plainly and decidedly recognises law and order as things to be observed even when, as was the case with the Jewish nation at this time, it was by injustice and oppression that the laws were made and enforced. We have thus a very clear rule to go by, for "God is not the author of confusion but of peace¹." He Himself paid tribute², as we know, and subjected Himself not only to the ceremonial law of Moses, but to the Roman law. The more quietly and regularly we conform to the existing laws of our country, or to the rules of our household, the more free we shall leave ourselves to serve God. We see in Bible history as well as in secular history that the neglect of, or the rebellion against, law and order, has invariably led men into trouble and difficulty. For wise reasons of His own, God has so framed society that in every age, and in every country, some must serve and some must rule. Let the necessary business of life be done justly, honourably, and exactly, and God will be glorified

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 33.

² Matt. xvii. 24-27.

by it. A true follower of Christ should be more punctual, and more conscientious in the discharge of his temporal duties than any other man. The observance or omission of these things is seen and known by all, and the Christian wishes in all things to commend his religion to the world, that his Master may be glorified.

It was Daniel's integrity in temporal matters that won from his enemies this high tribute—"We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel," and "neither error nor fault were found in him³." Let David's prayer at all times be ours—"Let integrity and uprightness preserve me."

ST. MARK XII. 18-24.

18. Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,

19. Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave *his* wife *behind him*, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

³ Dan. vi. 4, 5.

20. Now there were seven brethren : and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.

21. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed : and the third likewise.

22. And the seven had her, and left no seed : last of all the woman died also.

23. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them ? for the seven had her to wife.

24. And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God ?

OUR Lord strikes at once at the root of the error. "Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God." If this was so in the case of these questioners, let us take care that it is not so with us. Knowledge of the Scriptures, and a reverent attention to God's power will enlighten us on many subjects which at first sight seem obscure, but each of these courses requires thought and time. The study of the Bible is a duty far too much neglected. Our Lord told His followers to "Search the Scriptures : " do we do this ? or are we contented with a careless, occasional, glance at the chapters which have perhaps some early associations in our minds ?

It is only by "searching" that the hidden treasures will be found, and our faith established in those great doctrines which are taught by our Church and in our Creeds.

We are also to study "the power of God," not merely to gaze on the marvels of nature and to delight ourselves in its varying beauty, as a heathen mind might do, but to consider the works of God, as David did, as exhibitions of the Creator's love and greatness¹.

Let us try to realise that this wonderful succession of seasons—the Spring with its yearly resurrection of vegetable life; the Summer in its endless wealth and beauty; the Autumn in its decay; and the purifying mission of Winter, are all arranged and ordered by God, and by God alone. These are things which man's power or skill cannot influence in any degree. If life, and what we call death, in the vegetable world, are in God's hands, so are they also in the animal world. Is it more wonderful that the Creator should cause our dead bodies to rise again, than that He should infuse life at the beginning? Let us try to dwell

¹ Psalm civ.

often on thoughts such as these, and as we learn to read something of our Father's lessons in the wonders of Creation, so shall we love and trust Him more, and be able to give Him intelligent worship, for "He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered" and to be "sought out of all them that have pleasure therein."²

ST. MARK XII. 25-27.

25. For when they shall arise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

26. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

27. He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

WE are not told whether these Sadducees were convinced by our Lord's arguments or not. They may have asked partly in ignorance, and Jesus, who always looks on

² Psalm cxi. 2, 4.

ignorance with pity, answered their question fully. But their error on the subject of the resurrection was great, and we are all more or less responsible for our errors. The Bible is our plain guide, and we now have the precious words of Christ Himself to help us.

“When they shall rise from the dead, they are as the angels of God.” We know something of the angels’ state. We read of their ministering office, of their joy in heaven, and their service to God. Daniel speaks of the “thousand thousands which ministered to the Ancient of days, and the ten thousand times ten thousand, which stood before Him¹.”

“He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” Let these words also inspire our zeal and activity. Let them remind us that our service must have feeling and growth in it, if this God is to be our God. “He is not the God of the dead,” the cold useless life, with no high object for its aim, the worldly ambitions and the selfish desires, these are the tokens of what the Bible calls a “dead state.” Life and immortality are

¹ Daniel vii. 10.

one and the same to the true child of God, the things which perish in the using—"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is of the world and passeth away," are not worthy the name of living things, whilst the most trifling action done for God is immortal, accepted by Him for Jesus Christ's sake. "Your life," says St. Paul, "is hid with Christ in God." He is the God of the living. Is our life now in His keeping, that so when Christ shall appear, we also "may appear with Him in glory?"

ST. MARK XII, 28-34.

28. And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

29. And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

30. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment.

31. And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou

shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

32. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

33. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him *any question*.

IF love to God is to be our first and strongest feeling, it is of the utmost importance that we should rightly understand in what this love must consist, and how we are to increase it in our own hearts.

The next commandment—love to our neighbour—is, our Lord says, like unto the first; we may therefore study the two together. We shall find many distinctive marks both in the discourses of our Lord and in the Epistles, especially in those of St. John, which will guide our self-examination. “If ye love Me,” said Jesus, “keep

My commandments," and by a merciful order the love will increase as we serve Him, and the service become easier with the growth of our love. Even the love we have towards others grows by serving them: how much more is this the case with our love to God, Who will, we know, overrule all our mistakes and never reckon them up against us, if our motive be right. No shadow of misunderstanding can ever come between God and the soul which truly seeks Him.

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." This is the great gospel declaration, and Jesus adds that God will "with Him freely give us all things," the power to love Him more, the wish to obey Him, and above all, the Holy Spirit to help us in the great difficulty of submitting our will to God's. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." We know the measure of our self-love pretty accurately. It is shewn by the care which we take to guard ourselves from harm, and to give ourselves pleasure; it is constantly proved by facts.

These feelings, so natural to all, would, if allowed to stand first, make us utterly selfish ; but applied to our duty towards our neighbour they are the safeguards of our sincerity. Let us frequently examine ourselves by this rule—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" it is of universal application and of unerring truth, and may God help us to do so honestly.

ST. MARK XII. 35-40.

35. And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David?

36. For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

37. David therefore himself calleth him Lord ; and whence is he *then* his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

38. And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and *love* salutations in the market-places,

39. And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts :

40. Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

IN these verses we have another instance, not only of our Lord's intimate knowledge of the Old Testament, but also a distinct assertion of its inspiration, "David said by the Holy Ghost." St. Peter, who had so often listened to his Master's explanations of the Old Testament writings, tells us expressly that the Holy Ghost moved "holy men of God to speak¹." With what reverence then ought we to study the words which the Godhead has dictated, and how earnest should be our prayer that the same Holy Spirit should reveal their meaning to us. Our Lord told Nicodemus that only by the new birth of the Spirit can we even see the kingdom of God. The spiritual kingdom is as it were darkness without His revelation. If, without the power of God's Holy Spirit, it cannot be "seen," how much less could it be entered and taken possession of?

¹ 2 Peter i. 21.

The Scribes, whose peculiar office it was not only to study the Old Testament with diligence, but to explain it to the people, and to transcribe it so as to multiply the copies, were unable to give our Lord any answer to His question—How Christ was the son of David and yet that David called him Lord? The true answer would have been a confession of the perfect Manhood and Godhead of Christ, and this confession they dared not make. It would have been to admit that their treatment and rejection of Christ was unscriptural.

Neither can we grasp the wonderful truth that Jesus is the only Saviour of mankind until we confess that we are sinners, that we need this Saviour because we have wandered far from God's holy ways, and have no power of ourselves to return, or to blot out the dark past—the long list of sins committed and of good left undone. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," says our Saviour, "no man cometh unto the Father but through Me," and again, "Whosoever cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

ST. MARK XII. 41-44.

41. And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

42. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

43. And he called *unto him* his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

44. For all *they* did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living.

HERE again we read of Jesus "beholding": "He beheld how the people cast into the treasury." He not only saw what this poor woman gave, but He knew the very home-wants which she had to struggle against. The Lord knew it was "all her living." She gave all she had to God, and here the story ends.

We read of no return made by our Lord, of no miraculous multiplying of her bread and oil. Even the words of praise were addressed not to herself, but of her, to the disciples.

We are not told that Jesus gave her no return, but neither St. Mark nor St. Luke mention that He did so ; and had Jesus given her a direct promise of help, the sacred writers would probably have recorded it. Does not this teach us that our Divine Master deals with His children not always as we should expect, but as He in His infinite wisdom sees best ? The Lord saw her conduct and approved of it. This is enough for us to know, and enough for us to remember when any time of sacrifice comes to ourselves. The Lord knows all, He knows everything about our home circumstances, everything about our affairs. He knows not only what we give, but also what is left to us. The practice of giving of our own, as we call it, to others, is lifted by our Saviour into the divinest regions. "Inasmuch," He says, "as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

How very little will help the least of Christ's brethren ! It is for our own sakes that the giving of our money, or our time, or whatever we may have to give, is blessed ; it purifies

our selfishness, and ennobles our life ; it forms even here upon earth a link with Jesus Christ.

We see that it was the self-denial of this poor widow which so greatly pleased our Lord, not so much the gift, as the self-sacrificing spirit which prompted the gift. Have not we all equally the power and the opportunity of bringing this spirit unto Him ?

The Lord's treasury in heaven is filled with strange and varied gifts—the cup of cold water and the widow's mite lie side by side with the gold and the silver and precious things which David and Solomon offered, “so willingly, in the uprightness of their heart¹.”

ST. MARK XIII. 1-8.

1. And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here !*

2. And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings ? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

3. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over

¹ 1 Chron. xxix.

against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,

4. Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

5. And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any *man* deceive you:

6. For many shall come in my name, saying I am *Christ*; and shall deceive many.

7. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for *such things* must needs be; but the end *shall not be yet*

8. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these *are* the beginnings of sorrows.

WE read no more of our Saviour entering the Temple. His teaching in it was finished. What can we learn from looking back on the many occasions when He went there? One thing strikes us very clearly, that although both the building and the worship were defiled and degraded, the Lord honoured the Temple repeatedly with His presence. Who can tell what effect His teaching, and the reverence of His manner, had on many a

careless Jew who saw Him there? Perhaps Joseph of Arimathea and others may have looked back with life-long thankfulness to having followed Jesus into the Temple. If we neglect going to God's house of prayer, and omit the appointed means of grace, we may miss the Saviour's presence. He may have prepared some message for us which may never be sent again. We never know when God will give us a special blessing, but we are right in expecting it to come in the plain path of duty and service.

How startling to His hearers must the Lord's comment have been, that all belonging to their beautiful Temple was to be destroyed, that nothing of all that costly and complicated building was to be left! The disciples were naturally anxious to hear more particulars about this prophecy. They asked Jesus to tell the time and the sign. But our Lord did not tell them when the fulfilment should be. He gave them plain and unmistakeable signs of the coming event. They were to watch and to prepare, but not to be troubled. The wars and rumours of wars were a "needs be," but the kingdom which these

men were to be God's instruments in establishing would be built upon a sure foundation, and should never perish; a Spiritual Temple whose walls shall be called "Salvation," and whose gates be "Praise¹." Are the trials of our life fitting us to become a part of this Spiritual Temple, which shall abide for ever? Against which the storms of trouble and unbelief may beat, but can never prevail, for it is founded upon a Rock, and that Rock is Christ.

ST. MARK XIII. 9-13.

9. But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.

10. And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

11. But when they shall lead *you*, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

¹ Isaiah lx. 18.

12. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against *their* parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

13. And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

THE disciples had been led very gently and gradually to the field of their labours. Now their Master told them plainly of their future dangers and difficulties. Their courage was to be tested by persecution, but not until they had watched Jesus pass through His sufferings and death, and not until power was given them from on high. At first the condition of the apostles in their intercourse with Christ was a passive one—they were learners and nothing more, but they were learners from Christ Himself, and we know, from following their history after His death, how nobly they did endure unto the end. How simply and quietly their Christian course began! With the exception of the short time when they were sent forth by two and two to preach and to cast out devils, and to anoint the sick with oil, they had kept

close beside their Master, watching Him and learning from Him, and so preparing themselves, or rather being prepared, for the great and active work which lay before them. "Take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it is not ye that speak but the Holy Ghost."

The power of working miracles was, we know, limited and exceptional, it was only given to the first teachers of Christianity, and then, as St. Paul¹ tells us, only to some, but the gift of the Holy Spirit is offered to all. As we ask, so shall we receive. How full of comfort is the assurance that the Spirit's divine guidance shall be with us in all our difficulties as surely as it was with the apostles! Thousands have experienced this when brought face to face with some overwhelming difficulty or dreaded ordeal—their own power crushed, and their own resources perhaps utterly exhausted, and yet the very thing they most dreaded has turned out a blessing to them, a light has sprung up out of darkness.

How many can say with the prophet

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 6, 11.

Jeremiah: "Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon Thee, thou saidst fear not¹."

ST. MARK XIII. 14-20.

14. But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand), then let them that be in Judæa flee to the mountains:

15. And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter *therein*, to take anything out of his house:

16. And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.

17. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

18. And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

19. For *in* those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.

20. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

THESE words referred to the threatened

¹ Lam. iii. 57.

doom of Jerusalem. The disciples and their converts remembered them years after, when the days of affliction began, and acted upon them. Tradition tells us that no Christian was lost in the terrible siege of Jerusalem, which took place about forty years after this prophecy of our Lord.

All the Christians who were in Jerusalem before the Romans began to besiege the city, left it in haste, and fled literally, as Jesus had bidden them do, to the mountains, and were saved.

What a parable this passage is of our earthly life! We are bidden to flee from the city of destruction, which is the world, with its lusts and allurements—not in the winter of our days but in the spring-time of life. The stronghold is open to receive all.

“For the elect’s sake whom the Lord hath chosen He hath shortened those days.” How wonderfully man’s free will and God’s absolute power is shewn us here. The doom of the rebellious city had been decreed, and yet for the elect’s sake the days were shortened. It reminds us of Abraham’s intercessory prayer for Sodom. So

long as Abraham pleaded, God listened¹ and granted every intercessory request; it was only when Abraham ceased to ask that the Lord left him; who can tell whether Sodom might not have been saved had the pleading been continued down to one righteous man, and the place have been spared for Lot's sake? The "elect" are the believers in Christ in every age, and who can limit their influence on the decrees of heaven? Here we see that temporal misery was shortened for their sakes. Are we amongst the little company of true believers? Do our prayers go out for others? Is it well with the town or the household in which we dwell, for our sakes? We cannot tell what other destinies are linked to ours, or how by our example and prayers we may affect them. "None of us liveth to himself²."

ST. MARK XIII. 21-27.

21. And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here *is* Christ; or, lo, *he is* there; believe him not.

22. For false Christs and false prophets shall

¹ Gen. xviii. 20-33.

² Rom. xiv. 7.

rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if *it were* possible, even the elect.

23. But take ye heed : behold, I have foretold you all things.

24. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.

25. And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.

26. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

27. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

OUR Lord is here speaking of the end of the world, when hypocrisy and falsehood shall abound. Nature itself shall undergo great changes, but God's people shall be safe in His keeping. No harm can touch those who put their trust in Him ; they are secure in the uttermost parts of the earth, for the Mighty One of Israel is their defence. Let us take comfort in this thought, not for ourselves only, but for those we love, who may be far away in distant lands. His care, not ours, defends them. All places are the same to God ;

the sun and the moon and the powers of heaven are in His hand; His holy angels encamp round about them that fear Him.

We do not live in the days when false Christs try to seduce the world, but many false imitations of the Christian religion spring up and startle by their novelty and singularity. Would we discern between the false and the true? Let us apply the peculiar tests of Christ's doctrines to them, and judge by these whether the new ways are scriptural or not.

The teaching of Christ was characterised by meekness and humility. The Great Leader made Himself of no reputation and affected no singularity. "Love your enemies," "Forgive men their trespasses," "If any man desire to be first, let him be last of all, and servant of all." These and such as these were the new doctrines eighteen hundred years ago, they cannot be improved upon now; and where this teaching, with faith in Christ, is preached, we may be sure that the doctrine is sound. We are responsible, all of us, before God for what we believe. In these days of cheap publications we can

all have helps in our religious reading. People often say they have no time for studying the Bible, but the same persons find time for reading unprofitable books. Let our reading be such as the Lord Jesus would approve of ; let it be some gain to our minds for eternity as well as for time. Let us try to learn more about the Bible saints with whom we hope to spend our future ; let us study their lives and characters, that we may meet them, not as strangers and foreigners, but as fellow-citizens of the household of God.

ST. MARK XIII. 28-33.

28. Now learn a parable of the fig tree ; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near :

29. So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, *even* at the doors.

30. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.

31. Heaven and earth shall pass away : but my words shall not pass away.

32. But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no

man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

33. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

God has kept the day and the hour of the Great Judgment secret. Even Jesus Christ, as Son of man, knew it not. In this we have another instance of His literally bearing our infirmities. As our sacrifice and sin-bearer He laid aside, for awhile, that Divine part of His nature which related only to Himself. He repeatedly told the Jews and His disciples that the Father had sent Him, that He did the "works and spake the words He had seen with His Father."

His own glory He laid aside. How infinitely such humility must have increased our blessed Lord's mental sufferings. This was part of His sacrifice which should endure to the last of our race, and it has brought down His sympathy to every individual. We have the same support and consolation that Christ had. Prayer and the Holy Spirit's help and ministry, they will never fail us. Prayer will guard our souls from error, and watchfulness will shew us the snares which *are spread* around our path.

When we feel perplexed and discouraged about the continuance of evil and its mysterious power, let us remember that the end is in the Father's Hand. He knows when and how evil shall cease.

David, with the far-seeing eye of prophecy, which often reads the fulfilment when ages must intervene, exclaimed, "Oh thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end."¹ Well has one of our English poets written—

"And every prayer for universal peace
Avails that blessed time to expedite."

ST. MARK XIII. 34-37.

34. *For the Son of man is* as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

35. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

36. Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

37. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

¹ Ps. ix. 6.

"To every man his work." There are no idlers in God's household. Each individual has his own allotted place and portion. Each must fulfil the special work which lies in his path, not seeking for other tasks, or more glittering crosses, but simply taking up the duties—be they irksome, or congenial—as the day brings them round, and consecrating them to God. It is true that our Master is in a far country, but prayer and faith can bring Him to our side; and to all who thus habitually live with Him in the Spirit will His appearing bring no terror nor dismay, but perfect peace and uninterrupted communion.

The words of Christ refer to our death as well as to the end of the world; for with the night of death our opportunities in this life will close. How comforting is the thought to the child of God that Christ will come Himself to lead him through that far journey. When we enter the valley of the shadow of death He will be with us. Let us seek more entirely to depend on this mighty help, that so when the summons comes to each of us—"Prepare to meet thy God," we may go fear-

lessly forward, not relying on our own efforts, nor depending on our own good works, but humbly, though with perfect confidence, trusting to the merits of Christ. The inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and can never fade away, will then be ours, through the blood of Him who has purchased us for Himself, that we "should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light."¹

ST. MARK XIV. 1-10.

1. After two days was *the feast of* the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put *him* to death.

2. But they said, Not on the feast *day*, lest there be an uproar of the people.

3. And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured *it* on his head.

4. And there were some that had indignation

¹ 1 Peter ii. 9.

within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?

5. For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

6. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.

7. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.

8. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

9. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, *this* also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

OUR Lord commended the action of this woman so highly because it was prompted by love. How well is it for the timid loving spirit to know that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He will be our Judge and not man. It is the love which speaks through the offering, and not the offering itself, which is precious in the Saviour's sight. St. John tells us that it was Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who thus honoured her Lord in Simon's house. We can well imagine with

what feelings of mingled love, reverence, and gratitude, her heart was filled. She had probably heard the cavilling Scribes insult Him with their questions, and the Sadducees also who denied the resurrection, and who would not believe in her Lord, though Lazarus himself had returned from the unknown land at the call of Jesus, and was sitting at meat there also, an honoured guest in Simon's house. Mary knew that Jesus had accepted the ointment with which the woman who was a sinner had anointed His feet, in Simon the Pharisee's house,¹ and she wished to shew openly before all the friends of her daily life, in Bethany, that she knew Jesus was her Saviour.

He would not mistake her motive as Judas had done, and some whom he had influenced. She had sat at His feet, and had heard His words of love and power. "She is come aforehand," said Jesus, "to anoint my body to the burying." Jesus, and Jesus alone, knew her motive for coming; anxious to do what she could, her memorial was to be imperishable. Do we not see in the literal fulfilment of our

¹ Luke vii. 37-50.

Saviour's words, a rendering of His promise,
"The meek shall inherit the earth."

ST. MARK XIV. 10, 11.

10. And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.

11. And when they heard *it*, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

THE treachery of Judas is a most awful warning. He had been constantly with his Master, he had been given power, as one of the twelve, to cast out devils; to preach that men should repent; and to anoint with oil many that were sick, and to heal them. He had heard his Master say "Take heed and beware of covetousness;" he had heard His striking words about the danger of riches and the necessity of giving up all for Christ's sake; but his heart remained hard and worldly.

St. John throws much light upon the character of Judas by telling us that he was "a thief." Probably at first his dishonesty was

very small, but all who know their own hearts must have felt how quickly a cherished sin will grow and spread, and draw others in its train. Judas did not betray his Master in a moment of malice, but deliberately; he sought, we read, how he might conveniently betray him. The last echoes of Christ's words—"watch and pray"—had scarcely died away, when we are startled by reading of this dreadful treachery. The advantages and the knowledge of Judas were the same as those of the other Apostles, and yet, for the paltry love of money, he committed this awful sin. He had wilfully chosen "his own place," and he would not stop himself in his downward course. Let us look well into our own hearts and ask ourselves—Are we conscious of any growing sin there? Have we any plan in our lives that is unholy? Is there anything in our thoughts which, were we now in the visible company of Christ, we dare not talk to Him about? If there is, let us hasten to spread our sin before the Lord. He has promised, if we turn unto Him, to have compassion on us, "to subdue our iniquities and to cast all

our sins into the depth of the sea.¹” “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.²”

ST. MARK XIV. 12-16.

12. And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?

13. And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.

14. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

15. And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.

16. And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

THE Lord Jesus Christ was soon to offer Himself up, at the Passover, as the great

¹ Micah vii. 19.

² 1 John i. 9.

offering which should take away the sins of the whole world.

He wished to fulfil all the typical law of Moses, as well as all the prophecies relating to Himself. How quietly and simply did the Lord Jesus observe the great Jewish rite of the Passover.

He went to a stranger's house, and with His little band, one of whom was the traitor, fulfilled the law of Moses as He doubtless had done every year of His mortal life. In the Temple Christ had found all bustle and confusion, but in this man's house which He knew of, the large upper room was furnished and prepared. And so in the heart, where Christ is to be a guest, there must be no confusion, no disorder. He will often come to us, as it were suddenly and unexpectedly, but the preparation must be made beforehand. The Lord knows and watches this part of the work as well as the results. Solomon says, "the preparations of the heart in man, is from the Lord."¹

Can we feel that if Jesus Christ were to come again as a visible guest into the world,

¹ Prov. xvi. 1.

He would choose our homes, our rooms, to dwell in? Would He only see there the things which we are sure He would approve of? Would not these words be a good motto for us—"The Master saith, there make ready for Me?"

ST. MARK XIV. 17-26:

17. And in the evening he cometh with the twelve.

18. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.

19. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, *Is it I?* and another *said, Is it I?*

20. And he answered and said unto them, *It is* one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.

21. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

22. And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake *it*, and gave to them and said, Take, eat: this is my body.

23. And he took the cup, and when he had given

thanks, he gave *it* to them: and they all drank of it.

24. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

25. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God

26. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

JOHN gives us, in his Gospel, many minute and most interesting particulars of this farewell meal. We see Judas sitting for the last time at the same table as his Master and the other Apostles.

There are many who think he was admitted to the first celebration of the Lord's Supper with the eleven. He heard the solemn words—he ate of the consecrated bread, and drank of the cup, but in his heart there was no love to Jesus. The other Apostles, frail and timid as we know they were, were honest and true at heart. They had been learning lessons of humility which were even now bringing forth fruit. They were no longer disputing among themselves which should be the greatest, but were

full of anxiety lest a treacherous thought might be lurking in their hearts. "Is it I?" they said to Jesus one by one, when they heard him declare that one of their little company should betray Him. Had they not heard their Master say—"From within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, murders, deceit." Such humble-mindedness and self-distrust is our best preparation for receiving the Holy Communion, which our Church offers in remembrance of Christ's death and passion. He has said, "I came to call sinners to repentance," as only through union with Him can our sins be blotted out. Constantly to renew this union, by prayer and by partaking with a penitent heart of this blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is our best safeguard, so long as we are surrounded by this world's temptations and by the wiles of Satan. Let us remember, for our comfort, that though the devil may desire to have us, even as Christ said that he desired to have Peter, yet that if we are united to Jesus—abiding in Him—he cannot harm us, for "He that is for us is stronger than he that is against us."

ST. MARK XIV. 27-31.

27. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.

28. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.

29. But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet *will* not I.

30. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, *even* in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.

31. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

THE closing scene in our Lord's earthly life was drawing rapidly near. The Shepherd was soon to be taken from His sheep. How full of tender thought were our Lord's last words to them. He knew that His little band, though feeble and timid, were true at heart. He knew that they would sink under their coming ordeal, but He also knew that the bitter lesson of their failure would be the earnest of future success. St. Peter, whose natural boldness of character made him more

self-confident than the others, would have to learn the lesson of self-distrust more thoroughly than the rest. We know that he did do so, the same old courage remained, but not the self-confidence; "If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise," were not braver words, but very different in their spirit from his bold answer when challenged with the other Apostles before the Council¹, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Obedience took the place of boasting, reliance on Divine help that of self-confidence.

The Lord knew how bitter would be the shame and sorrow of His followers after deserting Him, and in compassion to their feelings of self-reproach he told them "After that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee." Words that we know they clung to, though scarcely realising what their Lord meant. How it must have soothed their sorrow to know that they would meet Him again. Truly our God is full of loving kindness and tender mercy. He is still the same, ever ready "to send from heaven and

¹ Acts v. 29.

save us from the reproach of him that would swallow us up²."

ST. MARK XIV. 32-42.

32. And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.

33. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;

34. And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.

35. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

36. And he said, Abba, Father, all things *are* possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

37. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour?

38. Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly *is* ready, but the flesh *is* weak.

39. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.

40. And when he returned, he found them asleep

² Ps. lvii. 3.

again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him.

41. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

42. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

“FATHER, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt.”

This short prayer of Christ reminds us forcibly of the words which He had taught His disciples, which we call “the Lord’s Prayer.” God’s Fatherhood is recognised at the beginning of both; then His government over all—“All things are possible to Thee”—“Thine is the kingdom the power and the glory.” “Nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt”—“Thy will be done.” What a perfect prayer for us to use in every trial, and what a wonderful privilege it is to know that we, miserable sinners, can approach the Almighty even as His own spotless Son did, pleading the same relationship and going boldly unto the throne of grace.

It is remarkable that, although the disciples were so repeatedly warned by their Master of their approaching trials, we nowhere read that before the Lord's death they really prayed. After His ascension a great change came over them; even before the descent of the Holy Ghost, we read "they all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication."

It is most interesting to watch the slow and gradual development of spiritual life in these first converts, and most encouraging to ourselves to think of Christ's marvellous patience with them. It seems as if they had been allowed to sound the very depths of human infirmity, that afterwards they might rise to the confidence and the power which St. Paul speaks of, when he says "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me¹." We too shall miserably fail if we trust in our own courage, or our own good intentions, but if we lean on God's strength and the guidance of His Holy Spirit, we shall prove "more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

¹ Phil. iv. 13.

ST. MARK XIV. 43-52.

43. And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

44. And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead *him* away safely.

45. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him.

46. And they laid their hands on him, and took him.

47. And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

48. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and *with* staves to take me?

49. I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

50. And they all forsook him, and fled.

51. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about *his* naked *body*; and the young men laid hold on him:

52. And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

WE see in these verses, how hard the heart can become if it sets itself wilfully against spiritual things. These very men who came out to take the Lord Jesus prisoner, had listened constantly to his words. "I was daily with you, in the temple, teaching," said Jesus unto them, and now they were themselves fulfilling those prophecies against their nation which they would not lay to heart. Are we not sometimes inclined to think that if our opportunities were greater of hearing God's Word read and explained to us, or if we were more thrown with religious persons, we should be different?

Here we see that even the daily teaching of Christ Himself failed to touch the heart or to change the conduct.

St. Matthew tells us that the chief priests delivered Jesus Christ for envy. Is it then possible that a secret sin admitted, and kept in the heart, can prove stronger than the teaching of Christ Himself? Yes, it is an awful truth that any sin wilfully kept and cherished in the heart and in the life, will shut out the grace of God. But let the sin be only brought to Christ, be it envy or

covetousness, or deceit—great even as Jacob's was—the Holy Spirit will help us to fight against it and to overcome it. The victory shall be ours, if we “faint not.”

Jesus said to the great multitude who came to take Him, “The Scriptures must be fulfilled.” He knew that the darkest prophecies of His sufferings were about to be fulfilled. He knew that it had been decreed in ages long gone by—for “He was slain from the foundation of the world”¹—that He was to be smitten of God—“bruised and wounded,”² that He was “to cry in the day time and find God silent.”³ This was to be the culminating point of His great agony. But to us, if we are God's people, belong all the comforting assurances of His love, the curse of sin has been borne for us, pain comes to us no longer as a sign of God's anger but as a mark of His love. “I will be with him,” says God, “in trouble.”

¹ Rev. xiii. 8.

² Isa. liii. 4.

³ Ps. xxii. 2.

ST. MARK XIV. 53-59.

53. And they led Jesus away to the high priest : and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.

54. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest : and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.

55. And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death ; and found none.

56. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.

57. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying,

58. We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.

59. But neither so did their witness agree together.

OUR Lord's enemies tried many and various ways to obtain His condemnation, and we know that they gained their end. St. Mark records very emphatically that "many bare false witness against Him"—recalling the great Commandment to our minds, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." Covetousness,

false witness, and murder were the three sins which Satan selected in his temptation of our Lord, in the wilderness; disguising them in their bare repulsiveness, as he alone can. Each was calmly conquered by Christ with the sword of the Spirit. Again, at the closing scenes of this wonderful history we see the same sins marshalled out, but now the evil influence falls on congenial hearts, and for a while Satan seems to triumph, and the end to be coming even as he desired.

A short time before His betrayal our Lord had said to His disciples, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me;"¹ but that wicked spirit was hovering in the hearts of all who surrounded Christ, it seemed as if the very common feelings of humanity were poisoned by his baneful presence. Doubtless there are special times in which he is allowed more power, and given greater opportunities, than at other times; but we must remember that though he can tempt, he cannot harm those who have God for their defence; he cannot make us do wrong if we ask God's help to do right; he cannot conquer us

¹ John xiv. 30.

if we resist him. But the Christian must realise this evil presence. If his coming—that is to say, his special attack, at some particular time,²—was a reality to our Lord and to the Bible saints, surely it will be so to us. “They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.”³

ST. MARK XIV. 60-65.

60. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what *is it which* these witness against thee?

61. But he held his peace and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

62. And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

63. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?

64. Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

65. And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto

² 1 Chron. xxi. 1; 2 Cor. xii. 7.

³ Ps. cxxv. 1

him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

OUR Lord bore every insult shown to Him as the Son of man with silent dignity, but when His divine office and His relationship to His Heavenly Father was questioned, He gave the grand clear statement recorded by St. Mark—Again the high priest asked Him; “Art thou the Christ?” And Jesus said “I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power.” St. John tells us that “every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced him.”¹ Ages may pass away, and our bodies lie crumbling in the dust, but the word of the Lord standeth sure and abideth for ever.

At the beginning of His public ministry the Lord had charged His disciples to love their enemies, and to bear patiently with those who should injure them.

Now He was leaving the world an example of meekness which should endure for ever. No one can henceforth say that any injury is too great to be borne, or any taunt unendurable.

¹ Rev. i. 7.

The Lord Jesus Christ learnt obedience we are told—as we all must do—“by the things which He suffered;”² for we must remember that obedience was unknown to Him in Heaven. As the Son of God, He was equal with God. “I and My Father are one.”³ His Father’s will was His will, and as God He shared the glory of Heaven before the world was, and its eternal perfection of will and power.⁴

But as the Son of man Jesus had to learn obedience through suffering. Not that His will resisted His Father’s will, but in order to bear the weight of our redemption He had to submit to the consequences of sin in others, and to learn the obedience which God exacts from imperfection. We know that hereafter, even for those who are saved through Christ, obedience will be absorbed in free and willing service. We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him.⁵ Our Lord’s prayer to His Father for His redeemed was that they may be made perfect in one—“As thou Father art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us.”

² Heb. v. 8. ³ John x. 30. ⁴ John i. 1. ⁵ 1 John iii. 2.

ST. MARK XIV. 66-72.

66. And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest :

67. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.

68. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch ; and the cock crew.

69. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is *one* of them.

70. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art *one* of them : for thou art a Galilæan, and thy speech agreeth *thereto*.

71. But he began to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not this man of whom ye speak.

72. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon he wept.

WE have all known from childhood the story of Peter's fall. His character is so transparent that we can almost read the very thoughts as they passed through his mind. He was unwilling to forsake his Master alto-

gether, though even the motive for going into the palace of the high priest was a low one—"to see the end" as St. Matthew tells us. Unwatchful and self-confident, Peter's hour of trial was drawing nigh, but a voice had gone up in earnest supplication to God's throne for this wayward disciple—Jesus had prayed for him, and though he fell, he rose again, and his repentance worked that marvellous change which we soon read of in his character. From being a proud self-confident man, he became lowly and humble. Of all the Apostles, Peter was the most daring and courageous, and yet it was through cowardice that he so deeply fell. How wonderfully true the Bible characters are to human nature, as it ever has been, and ever will be. Who has not felt that his most signal defeats have sprung from the very quarter where he felt himself most secure? The enemy will wisely attack that point of the besieged city which is carelessly guarded.

The Christian's daily motto should be "Watch and pray." Watching will shew us where our dangers lie, and prayer will bring down God's help from above. "The Lord

is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him."¹

ST. MARK XV. 1-5.

1. And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes, and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried *him* away and delivered *him* to Pilate.

2. And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest *it*.

3. And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing.

4. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee.

5. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.

A NEW character is here introduced to us—that of Pontius Pilate, whose name is repeated publicly in our churches each Lord's Day. He was the Roman governor of Judæa, and probably knew less about Jesus than did the other actors in this terrible scene. He

¹ Nahum i. 7.

saw a prisoner, bound, brought before him, who was accused by the chief priests of "many things." It was his duty, as governor, to investigate closely the nature and truth of those accusations. At first Pilate's conduct was natural and straightforward, and to the plain question which he asked of our Lord, he received a plain and direct answer. What should his course of conduct have been after this? Any honest mind can reply. The laws of justice are the same now as they were when God commanded the Israelites of old, "Thou shalt not receive a false report."² Even human wisdom has made this a principle in every court of justice, that until proved to be guilty, the prisoner is treated as innocent. Pilate knew this, for he was an educated, as well as an experienced man, but he deliberately acted against his convictions. We can trace his motives for so doing by studying the three other Gospels. St. John records our Lord's conversation with him at considerable length. St. Luke tells us that Pilate admitted that he found no fault in Christ. He was not expected to decide

² Exodus xxiii. 1; *margin*.

whether his prisoner was Divine or not, but his duty was to act as an honest and impartial judge. We may ask, as did Pilate, "What is truth?" but if we deliberately refuse to act up to the light and knowledge that have already been given to us, we cannot expect to be led by the Spirit of God. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."³

ST. MARK XV. 6-14.

6. Now at *that* feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.

7. And there was *one* named Barabbas, *which lay* bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.

8. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire *him to do* as he had ever done unto them.

9. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

10. For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.

11. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

³ Gal. vi. 7.

12. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do *unto him* whom ye call the King of the Jews?

13. And they cried out again, Crucify him.

14. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

PILATE wanted to give his conscience over into the hands of others. He wanted the multitude to decide for him. He had probably heard of the works of mercy which Jesus had done among the Jewish people; he had heard of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem; and now he hoped that this same multitude would relieve him of the difficulty of deciding about his prisoner's fate. But God will never help us in this way. On the contrary, when once we know a certain course of conduct to be right, and yet do not follow it, difficulties will multiply on every side. The helps we trusted to will deceive us, like the delusive lights which we read of, which send a flickering gleam over the distant scene, deceiving the anxious traveller, whose compass is broken and whose guide has left him. So is it ever with the advice of those who do

not choose God's Word for their law ; it will lead farther and farther from peace and happiness, and even in this world will bring us to shame and misery.

Peter, who was now weeping tears of sorrow, was not apparently a braver or a better man than Pilate, who wished to content the people ; but the one was being justified because he repented, while the other went on wilfully from injustice to injustice.

We read that the chief priests moved the people to ask for the release of Barabbas, in the stead of Jesus. A short time before, we heard they would have taken Jesus themselves by force, but were afraid to do so because the people gladly received Him. Their transient feelings were prompted by excitement alone, and had no root or stability. Let us beware of false excitement in connexion with religion, it is like the lurid flame of some forest fire which distorts the proportions and falsely colours the face of nature, whilst the calm steady principles of right and religion are like the glorious sun which pursues its course from age to age, bringing fertility and warmth to all.

ST. MARK XV. 15-23.

15. And *so* Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged *him*, to be crucified.

16. And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Prætorium ; and they call together the whole band.

17. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his *head*.

18. And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!

19. And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing *their* knees, worshipped him.

20. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

21. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

22. And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

23. And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh : but he received *it* not.

WE have seen how large a share contempt and mockery formed in our Lord's sufferings.

In the typical sacrifice of Isaac this was in no wise the case; and Daniel, also a type of Christ, had the respect and sympathy of royalty. Why then was this superfluous and most trying addition made in the case of God's own Son? Surely, as St. Peter tells us,¹ that His example through this trial may lead us to follow in His steps. How hard it is for us to bear contempt or ridicule patiently; how hard it is to feel that our motives are wilfully misconstrued, that our past words are turned into false witnesses against us. At one time or another of our lives we are sure to have this trial. God has a very special end in view, that we may have "fellowship with the sufferings of Christ."²

The crown of thorns, which the soldiers platted and put about the head of our Lord, probably represented, in some mysterious manner, the sinless suffering of nature. Thorns were the emblems of that curse which the disobedience of our first parents brought, not only on the human race, but also on all that the earth brings forth.³ "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain to-

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 21, 23.² Phil. iii. 10.³ Gen. iii. 17, 18.

gether until now," but all things, "whether they be things in heaven, or things in earth" shall in the "times of restitution" be reconciled to God by the blood of Christ's cross.

ST. MARK XV. 24-32.

24. And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

25. And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

26. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

27. And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.

28. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

29. And they that passed by railed on him wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,

30. Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

31. Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.

32. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now

from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

IN the Book of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, that beautiful acrostic poem of the Hebrew Church, the Holy Spirit thus describes the sufferings of Christ: "Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow which is done unto Me? wherewith the Lord hath afflicted Me in the day of his fierce anger." St. Mark tells us "they that passed by railed on Him." The chief priests mocked Him, and referring to the miracles of love and mercy which Jesus had performed before them, said, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." The taunts they used were very like those of the devil when he tempted Christ in the desert. He had then urged our Lord to throw Himself down from one of the pinnacles of the Temple, for he added, "It is written He shall give His angels charge over Thee to keep Thee in all Thy ways." Our Lord then answered him with the words of God, but now Jesus Christ chose to suffer in perfect silence.

The world's cry is still "Let Christ descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe." But the Saviour says, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.¹"

ST. MARK XV. 33-39.

33. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

34. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

35. And some of them that stood by, when they heard *it*, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.

36. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

37. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

38. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

39. And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up

¹ John xx. 29.

the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the son of God.

IN the days of His public ministry, our Lord often sought out solitude, and now as His sufferings were about to culminate in death, nature, that silent expression of God's love, was in harmony with the Redeemer's sufferings. "There was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour." St. John tells us that "all things were made by the Word of God." "He upholdeth all things by the Word of His power," and "by Him all things consist." It was fitting then, that in the hour of Christ's death, nature itself should, as it were, be blotted out.

When we dwell on Christ's wonderful sacrifice, we must always bear in mind that though His bodily sufferings were those of a man, the life which He laid down was divine, and divine in its power. This power He yielded up for our sakes. And in this grand sense the death of Christ was, it may be, the only death since the creation of the world; for all life and power in man are but a loan. In Christ, life and power were self-existing, and for a while

they ceased to be. "He gave up the Ghost." Jesus had said to the Jews, "I lay down My life, no man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." The sacrifice was also universal, for "we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man."¹ St. Paul, in dwelling on this marvellous sacrifice, says, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"²

ST. MARK XV. 40-47.

40. There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;

41. (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

42. And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,

¹ Heb. ii. 9.² Heb. ii. 3.

43. Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.

44. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling *unto him* the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.

45. And when he knew *it* of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.

46. And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.

47. And Mary Magdalene and Mary *the mother* of Josès beheld where he was laid.

IT is with feelings of great relief that we now read of the conduct of Joseph of Arimathæa. "He went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus." The women who had so long followed Jesus, looked on "afar off"; and though their sympathy was like that of one who stands with refreshment ready to give to a soldier, dying in the enemy's camp on a battlefield, but who cannot brave the risks of reaching him, still even this was accepted by the loving heart of Jesus, and found its reward, as the next

chapter tells us. But Joseph of Arimathæa, with whom, St. John records, was Nicodemus, stands out in bold relief in this dark passage.

He was no timid disciple now ; he had not consented to the counsel of the chief priests, or to their wicked deed, and he would shew, before all, how he honoured the dead body of Christ. Has it ever happened that we have found ourselves in company with those who make a mock at holy things? who take God's holy name in vain, or jest at religion, or speak lightly of His holy Word? The example of Joseph of Arimathæa should remind us of what one man can do. It is always hard to take the unpopular side, and Satan will suggest many selfish reasons against our doing so. Why should we interfere? Why should we pretend to be better than others? Perhaps when Christ, or His Word, are being dishonoured, there are others, who are standing looking on, "afar off," hearts too timid to profess what they feel, voices too weak to take the lead for right, but anxious and longing for some bold Joseph to come and lead them to the Saviour. Let Christ's own words encourage us : "Whosoever shall

confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God."¹

ST. MARK XVI. 1-8.

1. And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2. And very early in the morning the first *day* of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

3. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

4. And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

5. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

6. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen: he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

7. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

¹ Luke xii. 8.

8. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any *man*; for they were afraid.

THE crucifixion of our Lord took place on the Friday. He was buried that evening, and His body lay in Joseph's new tomb hewn in the rock. The simple funeral was over. The mourners whom we should naturally have expected to see, were absent. No apostle, no relative, is mentioned. Only the women who came from Galilee, Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathæa, appear to have been there. What happened on the Saturday, the Sabbath of the Jews, we do not know. "The Sabbath," our Lord had said, "was made for man," and now its compulsory quiet was honoured by the resting of the Saviour's body until the morning of the third day, which is our Sunday, or Lord's Day. The four Evangelists give different details, of extreme interest, of the events of that Easter morning.

The angel who gave the message of Jesus to the faithful women, had doubtless been one of the rejoicing host in heaven over Peter's tears of repentance. Now he is the bearer

of Christ's tender thought of His erring servant. "Tell his disciples and Peter." Peter had fallen the lowest, but his heart was now the saddest of all the chosen band. We read of no word of rebuke or reproach. The dealings of our Lord with His disciples after His resurrection, were, if possible, even more loving than before. Let us remember this not only for our own endless comfort, but also in our dealings with the faults and infirmities of others. Has any one wronged us? Has any friend forsaken us, when things have gone against us? Have those we trusted and loved left us to our enemies, without so much as speaking one word in our defence? Let us try to cultivate the feelings of our Lord towards His disciples, and like Him "forgive, if we have ought against any."

ST. MARK XVI. 9-13.

9. Now when *Jesus* was risen early the first *day* of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

10. *And* she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.

11. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

12. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.

13. And they went and told *it* unto the residue : neither believed they them.

“JESUS appeared first to Mary Magdalene.” If, as is generally supposed, former sin had brought her under the power of the seven devils which the Lord had cast out of her, how encouraging it is to all repentant sinners to know that Jesus thinks first of them. He had repeatedly shewn that He does so—by the parables of the lost sheep, the prodigal son, the ten pieces of silver, the publican in the temple, and many others. But now, after His resurrection, when His sufferings as very man were over, and the weight of substituted sin was gone for ever, would His heart still be as tender and pitiful to those infirmities and sins which had caused Him to drink the bitter cup of shame and suffering? Surely the first whom He would seek out would be the beloved Apostle John, or the virgin Mary,

or Joseph of Arimathæa. But the Lord's ways are not as our ways, nor are His thoughts like ours. The penitent woman, who had shown her love by standing near His cross, by following the simple funeral, and now by going again to the sepulchre to anoint her Master's body, it was she to whom Jesus *first appeared*.

We can hardly understand the wonderful power of unbelief which existed in the hearts of the disciples; their Lord had told them plainly and repeatedly that He should rise from the dead, and yet they did not believe. One great reason of their unbelief was that they had not searched the Scriptures. St. Luke records that our Lord expounded to the disciples, in their walk to Emmaus, all the things concerning Himself in the writings of the prophets. Let us take warning from their error. We have an open Bible and the Holy Spirit to illuminate its sacred pages. Let us study those pages more earnestly than we have done, and many a promise and prophecy will then shine out brightly to reward our study.

ST. MARK XVI. 14-18.

14. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

15. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

16. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

17. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

18. They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

THE Lord had already appeared to the weeping, disappointed women, and to the friends in their country walk, now He shewed Himself "to the eleven as they sat at meat." Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. No employment however commonplace, no innocent recreation, no grief, excludes Him. "The Lord is at hand," ready to be the comforter, the companion, and the guest, if the heart will but receive Him. In our beautiful service of Holy Communion we admit that it is our bounden

duty, at all times, and in all places to give thanks to God. How much happier would our lives be, if we could carry into practice what we know to be God's will concerning us, to give Christ an abode in our hearts. It is realising His presence in our common daily employments, and in our pleasures, as well as in our duties, that makes the very life of Christianity.

The orders which Jesus now gave His Apostles must have startled them very much. They were to go into all the world, preaching and working miracles. All the miracles were to be beneficent, acts of kindness and mercy. We know that this power lasted in the Early Church for about one hundred years. As new-set plants need careful watching and nursing, until they have fast taken root, so did God shower on the Early Christian Church the gifts of miracles at its first plantation. These outward miracles are no longer needed, but let us thank God that the working of spiritual miracles has never declined, and never shall pass away. The works of the flesh can be crucified by the power of God with the affections and lusts,

and in their place, out of the same heart, can grow and ripen the fruits of the Spirit, whose beauty St. Paul describes, "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."¹

ST. MARK XVI. 19, 20.

19. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

20. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

THIS is the end. The Lord Jesus Christ went to His Home above, the disciples began their mission-work on earth. "The Lord worked with them;" here was the secret of their success. Who would have thought that a little company of working men, most of them destitute of any advantages of education, unassisted by the countenance of any authority, would in a short space of time draw the world after them? Thirty years after Christ's death the Christian religion had spread through the greater part of the

¹ Gal. v. 22, 23.

Roman Empire, and was growing daily; and the little seed, which was watched and nourished by Christ Himself, has continued to bear fruit unto our day. So will it ever be. If we wish to serve our Master in Heaven we must ask Him to "work with us." Without His help all our greatest efforts will be utterly useless; but with His power in our hearts, we too can do "all things." If we live in His secret place, and under His shadow here, we shall, in due time, ascend after Him, and enter the heavenly home which He is now preparing for all who love Him.

Let us pray earnestly to God that, as the life of each one of us is lovingly watched by our Great Redeemer, and by the "innumerable company of angels," the solemn words of Ephraim's condemnation may never be pronounced by God over us—"I have written to him the great things of My law, but they were counted as a strange thing."¹

¹ Hosea viii. 12.

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